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January-March, 1938

CHANGE IN MODERN TEMPER *G. P. Voigt*

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CAN CAPITALISM SURVIVE? *G. Ripley Cutler*

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AMERICA: PARADISE OR PARADOX? *M. B. Stern*

THE POWYS FAMILY *Gilbert E. Govan*

WIDSITH AS ART *Lascelles Abercrombie*

POEMS by Theodore Roethke, Nancy Telfair,  
John Ritchey, and Lodwick Hartley.

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**I**F we take the widest and wisest view of a Cause, there is no such thing as a Lost Cause because there is no such thing as a Gained Cause. We fight for lost causes because we know that our defeat and dismay may be the preface to our successors' victory; we fight rather to keep something alive than in the expectation that anything will triumph.

—T. S. ELIOT

# Sewanee Review

JANUARY-MARCH, 1938

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Sign Though No Sign (*poem*) . . . . . Theodore Roethke 3

The Change in the Modern Temper . . . . . Gilbert P. Voigt 4

*The alteration of sensibility in the last decade is the most obvious characteristic of modern letters. The outstanding characteristics of this change are pointedly noticed by the author of this essay. Mr. Voigt is a member of the faculty of Wittenberg College, Springfield, Ohio.*

Stuart Chase . . . . . Charles I. Glicksberg 7

*The author of this essay is a teacher in the Public Schools of Newark, New Jersey and has contributed numerous articles on the outstanding American critics to this and other periodicals. His diagnoses have attracted widespread attention because of his larger theme of delineating the chief currents of American opinion in an independent and just fashion. His present comments on Stuart Chase are particularly appropriate because of the recent excitements Stuart Chase has aroused by his canny articles in HARPER's on the animated squirmings and transmutations of words by skilful propagandists with fixed obsessions.*

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Can Capitalism Survive? . . . . . G. Ripley Cutler 26

*This first installment of a series of essays to appear in this quarterly examines the fundamentals of the system under which Americans live and probably will have to live for some time to come. The author is an A.B. and M.A. of Yale University, sometime a student at l'Ecole libre de science politique in Paris, and at present, associated with the brokerage firm of Estabrook & Company of Boston, Massachusetts. He is a member of a distinguished family long familiar with the workings of Capitalism through American banking.*

Waiting . . . . . Nancy Telfair 35

Tennessee.....Grace Stone 36

Throughout the present year, Miss Stone will continue a series of articles on the State of Tennessee as a social and economic laboratory. The SEWANEE REVIEW is only one of a large number of striking cultural phenomena of Tennessee: its independence and persistence in calling for adequate measures to ensure larger and richer qualities of life represent the fusion of culturism and frontierism for which Tennessee has always striven. The significance of this Southern State looms larger, as time passes, upon the mind of those who are aware of fermenting forces in our civilization. Miss Stone's articles are therefore timely and informing. Miss Stone is a Master of Arts of the University of Wisconsin, having studied under Dr. Harry Hayden Clark, one of the keenest interpreters of the American scene.

America: Paradise or Paradox?.....Madeleine B. Stern 45

This is the last of three continued articles on the general subject of literature as art or propaganda written by Miss Madeleine B. Stern of New York City. In this installment, Miss Stern examines American treatments of life under the Marxist formula and points out the futility of the too-consciously Marxist novelists and interpreters of materialist dialectics.

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In this brief note on Montaigne, Mr. Gruen indicates an aspect of Montaigne which is fresh and revealing. It dispenses with much of the conventional notions concerning the great French essayist. Mr. Gruen is a member of the faculty of New York University.

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This cursive discussion of the novels of the three Powys brothers (John Cowper, Theodore, and Llewellyn) is written by one of the most widely read librarians in the country. Mr. Govan is the Librarian of the University of Chattanooga who writes with gusto and affection of authors he genuinely likes.

When Absence Begins (poem).....Nancy Telfair 90

Among the Quarterlies.....Arthur E. DuBois 91

The sprightly missionary zeal of Mr. DuBois is devoted this time to the question raised by Mr. John Crowe Ransom in the Fall 1937 issue of the VIRGINIA QUARTERLY REVIEW, "Criticism, Ltd."

In the present comment of "Among the Quarterlies", the editor of the SEWANEE REVIEW (who really earns his living trying to teach Shakespeare and other classics of English literature) takes Dr. DuBois's lashings on his naked back as one of those Ph.D.'s who are doing the best they can with what they have, even though what they have isn't really very much. The editor apologizes to Dr. DuBois for squealing in sympathy without permission at one point at which in a footnote (page 96), said editor meekly murmurs in unison with the terrible DuBois.

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by *Dempster MacMurphy*

in THE CHICAGO DAILY NEWS, Wednesday, Oct. 20, 1937.

# SEWANEE:

## THE CAMEO OF AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES

The high spot of the tour up to the moment, probably of the entire journey, was a pause at Sewanee, THE UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH. In the gathering dusk the party could trace only the outlines of the natural and architectural charms of the place, but its members entered the Chapel and found there an American Westminster, with memorials to great figures Sewanee has given to Church and Nation—among them Hudson Stuck, Gorgas, and Archie Butt.

There, too, they sensed something of the spirit of this famous and at the same time little known institution atop the Cumberland Plateau. Its small company of students living beautifully in an atmosphere as old world as Oxford, enjoy an intimate personal relationship with a distinguished faculty—a faculty that stands, as Sewanee has ever stood, for decency, for taste, for culture and for character.

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Thirty-eight students, representing fourteen Southern and Eastern States, were enrolled in the newly created school, which closed a six-weeks' term on July 28, 1937. The wide variation in the preparation of students for the courses offered is shown by the fact that the number included two undergraduates from Dartmouth College, nine M.A.'s, and three Ph.D.'s. Twelve enrolled as candidates for the degree of Master of Arts.



## The 1938 Summer Session

Officers of THE UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH are encouraged by the success of the First Summer Session to continue THE SEWANEE FRENCH SCHOOL as a permanent feature. The Bulletin for the 1938 Summer Session is in process of preparation and will be available upon request.



### *Principles of the Sewanee French School*

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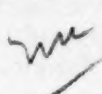
# Sewanee Review

VOL. XLVI]

[No. 1

JANUARY-MARCH, 1938

*by the editor*



## ASIDES AND SOLILOQUIES

A cynic might say that the best way to dispose of the threat of the dictatorial totalitarian states to their avowed enemies, democratic states like our own, would be to ~~meet them on~~ their own ground and kill them with kindness. Patience and long-suffering may, it is true, ultimately work to the crack-up from within of the totalitarian dictatorships, but patience is not violated in principle when democratic nations boldly meet totalitarian bombast not as bluster but as threats and challenges to our existence. Possibly the worst blow democratic states could give would be to grant all demands of the have-nots and let them suffer the consequences.

But that is a halcyon fancy.

DEMOCRACIES have at least this advantage over servile peoples: they, the democracies, know bluff and bluster when they see it, and know the antidotes. Totalitarian dictatorships have dispensed, for all practical purposes, with the concept of universal peace: by boldly threatening war and building their cultures upon it they have succeeded in reviving the courage of their own peoples and prolonging the clouds of fear among other nations. Their idiom is war. Presumably they can understand no other

dialect. They have set the tune. We must prepare to dance. Have they really the breath to keep on piping?

ON November 30, the *New York Times* boldly took the initiative when it examined the present neutrality policy of the United States by saying, "The United States has lost its leadership in world affairs and to that fact largely can be attributed the impotence of the Nine-Power Treaty Conference in Brussels. The reason for this loss of influence is plain: treaty-breaking governments and dictators have become convinced that for no cause short of actual invasion will the United States imitate or join in any effective movement to assure world peace." The great metropolitan daily broke an *impasse* by differing with the formal stand of Washington and provided a frame for discussion:

Our statesmen and leaders of public thought could aid peace mightily if, losing fear of the blind peace groups and gaining confidence that plain common sense and self-interest can be trusted, they engaged in public exchanges to put the enemies of peace on notice that the great democracies are aware of what is planned and will stand together against it.

TWO options are accessible: an *entente cordial* with Britain, France, and the other democratic nations of Europe; or the entrance of the United States into the League of Nations. The objection to the *entente cordial* is the fear of the old-fashioned secret diplomacy and the none-too-clear record of our former allies in the recognition of American coöperation in the last war and their stubborn refusal to face the matter of debt settlement. If our democratic civilization is endangered, we need not solve our difficulty by recourse to obsolete modes of coöperation but proceed openly, honestly, and fearlessly to work out with all other democratic governments our problems of war and peace at Geneva. It was an American concept in the first place which was wantonly betrayed by our national political manoeuvring when America failed to become a member of the League. Now, as a coöperating nation openly affiliated with all other League nations, we may avoid the cynical implications of being an "Uncle Shylock" or the charge laid against Great Britain by Mr. Quincy Howe in his notorious *England Expects Every American to Do His Duty*.

**B**Y affiliating with the League of Nations, America may and probably must prepare to sacrifice material and men for the concept of international democracy. Fascism and Nazism may, until America's entry into the League, bulldoze separate nations, but will they risk challenging the United States if the intention of accepting swiftly the challenge be thoroughly understood by Germany, Italy and Japan? Hypnotized by their own verbosity, treaty-breaking governments may indeed mistake the determination and sincerity of peace-loving nations and precipitate the long-heralded second phase of the World War: for that mistake of dictatorships, we must be prepared in mind and with material means of success in correcting it. Democratic nations, sinking their differences for a colossal idea, may demonstrate the truth of the American folk-saying, "Brag is a good dog, but hold-fast is a better."


*by Theodore Roethke*

### SIGN THOUGH NO SIGN

We sighed for a sign: for the word hung in cloud  
For the beacon at evening, for the bird,  
For hope written large on morning skies,  
For the drum, for the sun, for hands pointing to peace.  
Though the sign was withheld, the visible sugar denied,  
No trust was betrayed:  
Not explosion of sun but a gradual dawn,  
Not devious chance but slow-turning change.  
New landmarks will emerge after glacial scourge,  
A triumphal richness will well from the heart's core  
New faith will unfold, the truth burgeon forth.



by Gilbert P. Voigt



## THE CHANGE IN THE MODERN TEMPER

IN 1922 T. S. Eliot published his now noted "Waste Land," in which he pictured the spiritual chaos and desolation of the times. Seven years later Joseph Wood Krutch in his almost equally noted volume, *The Modern Temper*, recorded not only the prevailing religious unbelief but also the intellectuals' denial of life's beauty and goodness, a denial which reduced humanity to animality and made of human existence a hopeless tragedy. It was this debasing of "human conduct", as Stuart Sherman happily phrased it, to the low level of "animal behavior" that Robert Frost describes so well:

Our worship, humor, conscientiousness  
Went long since to the dogs under the table.  
And served us right for having instituted  
Downward comparisons. As long on earth  
As our comparisons were stoutly upward  
With gods and angels, we were men at least,  
But little lower than the gods and angels.  
But once comparisons were yielded downward,  
Once we began to see our images  
Reflected in the mud and even dust,  
'Twas disillusion upon disillusion.  
We were lost piecemeal to the animals,  
Like people thrown out to delay the wolves.

In the 'twenties, too, American life was the target for penetrating shafts of self-criticism on the part of our leading men of letters. Sinclair Lewis found that America with all her wealth and power had not produced a civilization that would satisfy the deeper desires of the human soul; Eugene O'Neil rose in fierce revolt against the existing social order; and H. L. Mencken lambasted the mediocrity and the tyranny of the all-powerful middle class.

The ink of Krutch's *Modern Temper* was hardly dry when a new day began to dawn in American literature. As V. F. Calverton had predicted, the new decade of the 1930's marked the end of the era of disillusionment and unbelief, and ushered in an age

of faith: on the one hand, in Humanism, on the other in Communism. The Humanist movement created a flurry, but not for long. The Communist movement in our literature has made much greater progress. The number of Marxist authors has steadily increased.

But there has arisen also a third group of writers: those who have turned their eyes toward Christianity as the hope of our land. The influential T. S. Eliot, now a convert to Anglo-Catholicism, believes not only that "civilization must have a religion" but also that America must have a Christian tradition. One of our most promising young playwrights, Emmet Lavery, in his remarkable first play, *The First Legion*, (1934) proclaims the final triumph of the Christian faith. Philip Barry, makes the heroine of his play, *The Joyous Season* (1934), a nun, remark: "You see I believe faith to be of first importance." And Eugene O'Neill in his last play, *Days Without End*, has portrayed the peace-bringing victory of faith in God over a "cynicism compounded of Atheism, Socialism, Anarchism, and the philosophy of Nietzsche." Willa Cather in her *Death Comes to the Archbishop* and *Shadows on the Rock*, Thornton Wilder in his *Bridge of San Luis Rey*, and Hervey Allen in his *Anthony Adverse* had heralded this new attitude toward Christianity, especially the Catholic faith.

Furthermore, the bitter criticism of American life so prevalent in the 'twenties has given way to an appreciation of its predominantly good features. Eugene O'Neill returned from Europe several years ago, after a residence in France, with a changed attitude toward the life of his native land—a new feeling of admiration, especially for its family life. Harold E. Stearns, one of the critical expatriates of the 1920's, has reexamined American life, and in his new volume, *America, A Re-Appraisal*, has pronounced it basically sound. This re-appraisal, according to Van Wyck Brooks, "is right in the temper of our time." And Percy H. Boynton closes his recent history of our letters, *Literature and American Life*, on a note of hope. We Americans, he asserts, have recovered the vigor, the self-confidence, the idealism of youth which were temporarily lost in the disillusionment that followed the World War.

After the appearance of Sidney Howard's noble play, *Yellow*

*Jack*, (1934) a writer in *The Saturday Review of Literature* remarked that "amid the prevailing love of the cynical and the crudely sensational, we still have a large public, and an increasing one, for things of the spirit." It was this public that Hervey Allen had in mind when he wrote to a friend in 1933:

People are tired . . . of shallow books about abnormal people and neurotic experiences with which they have no general sympathy . . . phrased in constipated staccato style. They are tired of the superficially smart and of the abnormally esoteric form of novel.

It would appear that William Allen White had a vision of the 1930's when he assured us some years ago that the faith and the illusions which had been destroyed by the World War and the peace that followed it, would some day return. For our writers have now come to realize that "without some faith they must starve spiritually", that great literature is the expression of faith, that

The West will have found her singer,  
When the singer has found his soul.

After he had received the Nobel Prize, Sinclair Lewis was asked what he proposed to do next. "Go back to my farm in Vermont," he replied, "and try for once to write a beautiful book." Since the World War but few beautiful books have been written in this country. But with the gradual return of faith it is likely that there will soon be more. Perhaps the day is even now at hand when, as Henry Seidel Canby predicted thirteen years ago, "faith-dipped" American writers will develop a style that is not only clear, concise, and vigorous, but beautiful as well.

by Charles I. Glicksberg

*Wm*

## STUART CHASE: THE STATISTICAL DON QUIXOTE

IN a moment of rash enthusiasm, Dr. Harry Elmer Barnes once maintained that Stuart Chase had forgotten more economics than Karl Marx ever knew. Promptly he was hauled over the coals by Mr. Calverton who dismissed Stuart Chase as being no more than a brilliant journalist writing on economic theory and practice. Chase, Mr. Calverton contended, had made only a minor contribution to the science of economics. Though this is a somewhat ungenerous estimate, it is approximately close to the truth. For Stuart Chase is neither an original nor profound thinker. He is strong on facts, on buttressing his principles with solid masses of statistics, but the principles themselves are largely derivative. For his most powerful ideological ammunition he is greatly indebted to Veblen, his master.

Stuart Chase is a popularizer in the sense that he can make matters dark and deep seem intelligible. He can transform the dismal science into a fascinating intellectual adventure. Speculations complex and abstract he reduces to simple terms. He writes plainly and concretely. His constant aim is to be comprehensible, to reach the mind of the reader, presumably a layman, to explain technical difficulties in a way that will strike home. He is, however, no vulgarizer. He may possibly misinterpret; he does not distort.

His successful style of exposition with its swift-running commentary of humor, its current slang, its personal interpolations, its straightforward presentation of facts, is born of a confident mastery of his material. No matter how technical his material, he is able to mold it to his own purpose. Horrendous terminologies or formidable metaphysical barriers do not frighten him. He ex-

amines every theory on its merit and then attempts to assess its functional value. His bold and direct manner of developing a thesis often conceals the enormous amount of labor and research that go into the preparation of his books. He quotes statistics, opinions, court decisions, legal documents, government bulletins, official surveys, authoritative books by the bushfuls. All this is done without ostentation or pedantry. He is never pretentious. His training as an accountant has perhaps saved him from the sterile pride of pedantry. His object is to employ all available resources in developing the particular thesis he has in hand. When his point had been made, he is done.

If he is not pretentious in matters of scholarship, he is even less so in his style. His is the speech of the average man, weighty, forceful, but unadorned. Rhetoric he abhors. He writes in a pithy vernacular. He appeals to the understanding, however, not the heart. This is the essence of his method—to steer clear of the Scylla of catchwords and the Charybdis of emotional compulsives. Logic is the rudder and motive power of his prose.

The framework of each of his books is disarmingly simple. He seizes upon some ambitious theme—men and machinery, the North American continent and its vast natural resources, industrial waste, the New Deal, social planning. Instead of paying heed to solutions that have already been proposed, he turns his attention to the situation itself. Only after examining all the facts involved, only after all the evidence has been gathered and carefully studied, does he venture to form a number of provisional conclusions. Then he is free to consult other students and compare his results with theirs. Quite often he arrives at unorthodox conclusions, but his originality really consists in nothing more than keeping his attention riveted on the object and shutting out every preconceived idea.

## II.

During the short space of about a decade, Stuart Chase has produced an impressive number of books. After *Your Money's Worth*, which he wrote in collaboration with Mr. F. J. Schling, he published *The Tragedy of Waste* (1926), in the preparation of which the entire staff of the Labor Bureau coöperated. His theme, which



is stated in the title, is supported by a staggering array of statistics. He offers a mighty host of figures gathered from a wide variety of sources to support his thesis that our industrial society is sadly disorganized, grossly inefficient. His manner is that of a skilful lawyer arguing a case: evidence is piled on evidence until the cumulative effect is overwhelming. We are convinced, we are bludgeoned, into agreement by the mounting mass of figures revealing the criminal waste of our human, natural, and material resources. His aim is to persuade us that we must erect and operate a *functional society*, one based on the satisfaction of human wants, not on the greed for profits. His plan is to eliminate waste completely. It is the engineer, not the prophet, that is looking musingly towards a better future.

The question of waste, the satisfaction of human wants, he insists, is an engineering, rather than a moral problem. Here, however, he falls into a fundamental error. For man is not merely an economic unit of energy. He is a complex social organism; influences of the most diverse kind determine his attitudes and activities. His moral outlook may determine not only his conception of non-essential goods, but also his relation to his work, to his neighbor, to the State, and to society. In trying to lift the discussion above the plane of the subjective and the controversial, in striving to remain cool and objective, Chase overlooks the vital importance of psychological forces in the problem of social reconstruction.

It is obviously not possible to analyze social dynamics solely from the point of view of engineering. In spite of himself, Stuart Chase cannot keep moral and social elements out of his plans. The basic question, after all, is not how many machines we can put into operation and the quantity of goods they can produce, but to what use the machines and the goods they produce will be put. How will they enrich and ennoble man's life? The only effective remedy Chase can suggest for the lack of coördination between production and national demands is to institute scientific management, planned control of industrial society. The available labor power, if properly utilized, could double the productive output, and do so without depleting our natural resources more than they are now. This would make possible for the population as a whole not only added material comforts but also enlarged cultural oppor-

tunities. For the aim of waste elimination is not merely to provide more mechanical gadgets. It has a more important function—to enable man to forget the bitter necessity of laboring to supply his subsistence-wants so that he may devote himself freely and joyfully to the creative life, the organic development of his inner potentialities. Though intangible, the values of the spirit, Chase acknowledges, are fundamental, and it is blindness to neglect them.

He is not certain, however, that he has found the correct solution. "We know no way out", he declares. Other men may be sure they know the road of salvation, but most of their maps and charts he condemns as absolutely chimerical. It is easy to theorize, it is difficult to engage in practical management. According to Stuart Chase, the one positive virtue of his proposed remedy—social engineering—is that it can probably be made to work. It can—if we take into account the behavior of man, individually and collectively. How can we predict or control the actions of millions of men, each with his own habits, outlook, superstitions, and beliefs? Nine-tenths of the social panaceas advanced are fantastic and futile because they neglect the psychological factors involved. Stuart Chase himself, though he eagerly looks forward to the formulation of a genuine science of social psychology, is guilty of this neglect. He would entrust the gradual elimination of waste to the social scientist—in other words, the engineer. Our medicine men, our politicians, have accomplished nothing. How, Mr. Chase asks, can the engineers do worse? Unfortunately he fails to explain satisfactorily how the social scientist, the engineer, will function in the face of the recalcitrance of the mass of men. How will he overcome the law of social inertia, the rooted conservatism, the powerful psychological resistance of the people? How will he secure power? Once having secured it, how will he exercise it?

Stuart Chase's next book, *Prosperity: Fact or Myth*, though it was not published until 1930, was completed before the sky fell out of the stock-market paradise in 1929. Since Chase had made no hare-brained prophecies, his analysis of the fever-chart of prosperity can stand the scrutiny of subsequent events. As usual he relies soberly on facts and the interpretations they warrant. He reiterates his belief that our only hope lies in scientific management of industry. Only the engineer will succeed in liberating the poten-

tialities of prosperity. Not owners but engineers should run an economic system. Alas! he remarks sadly, "the technician is the modern Prometheus in chains."

In *Men and Machines* (1930), he walks warily in order to avoid the pitfalls of superficial generalization. Instead of indulging in despair or sending forth optimistic predictions, he strives hard to understand the machine, its nature, its history, and its function. His instrumental realism is evident at the outset. Unlike the Spenglerian prophets of doom, he does not discern an ominous fatality in the machine. On the contrary, he finds that it contributes much that is genuinely desirable. Machines are not innately evil. If evils arise, they spring from an abuse of function—a point of view developed more fully and with a happier command of the ideological implications involved, by Mr. Lewis Mumford in *Technics and Civilization*. The machine, Chase insists, instead of being a colossal menace, a gigantic monster threatenng to devour us and our civilization, is actually saving men from the irksome necessity of tending machines. He is equally realistic when describing the injurious effects the machine is alleged to have on the worker's mind. Here his method stands in striking contrast to the gloomy generalizations of literary Jeremiahs like Messrs. Waldo Frank and James Oppenheim. "The amount of sheer undocumented nonsense in this category," writes Chase, "is colossal. I have read most of it." It is not the machine, he points out, that brings about nervous maladjustments; it is the fear of insecurity, the ever-present threat of losing one's job. This phobia has no cause-and-effect relation to the machine. It is a social product.

But what of the great and constant dread of technological unemployment? What good are machines and the economies they make possible if man must suffer the humiliation and the privations of joblessness? The fault, again, lies clearly with the organization and management of our economic society. Instead of putting all men to work and reducing the working time by half or reducing the working time a third and increasing the output of necessities and comforts two-thirds, which would end both poverty and unemployment, we have fathered chaos. We have speeded up production but have not increased the purchasing power which must cover it. We have not sought "to promote the *kind* of out-

put which makes for the good life." A mad economy has brought us to the verge of chaos. When, he asks, will we have sense enough to institute a sound and sane economy? "The machine, God knows, is willing enough. To date we lack the directing intelligence to make it function."

If the philosophers smile at his method of arriving at conclusions, Chase does not greatly care. Disinclined to trust bare intuitions, he has gathered facts and figures to justify the truth of his statements. His statistical method possesses at least the redeeming and essential virtue of getting at some concrete aspects of the truth. It demonstrates that man is not the slave of the machine; he has harnessed the lightning and utilized the engine for his use and benefit. The machine has ushered in certain evils, but for each of them there are decided compensations, promises of alleviation.

Though he is not in favor of launching prophecies, he permits himself, in *Men and Machines* the luxury of supposing what would happen in a utopian state if he had complete charge. It is a dream he frankly cherishes, and it is no more than a dream, but it is worth hearing. First of all, he would suppress armaments of war. Then he would encourage a program of regional planning so as to relieve our overcongested cities. He would take effective measures to conserve our natural resources and liquidate the phenomenon of overproduction. If labor-saving machines were put in operation, he would see to it that they actually saved labor. No machine would be permitted to replace workers faster than they could be replaced. Who would manage this state? Only those who understand the machine: engineers, scientists, machinists, foremen. We must make our choice. We can go on drifting, we can adopt a system of state socialism. "Or we can face the full implications of the machine, relying on no formula because none adequate have been created, with nothing to guide us but our naked intelligence and a will to conquer."

The next volume, *The Nemesis of American Business* (1931), has considerable charm as well as variety of content. In this book Chase is once more frankly affirming his faith as a social engineer, but without troubling himself overmuch about the necessity for supplying extensive proof. He is more personal and conse-



quently more ingratiating. It is quite within the range of probability, such are the paradoxes of posterity, that his unpretentious collection of essays and articles that appeared in various magazines will wear surprisingly well—better, perhaps, than his more elaborate and labored books.

We are already familiar with the arguments he presents. Coming back to the pandemonium of New York from the happy primitivism of Mexico, about which he had written a fascinating book, he was struck by the acute problem of unemployment. To attack the problem at its source, he recommends that we mobilize public opinion and every agency of publicity. Thus his suggestions for removing the causes of technological unemployment now amounts to a call for a psychological conversion. Merely to drive the idea into the national consciousness would be an important achievement. Our economic system can no longer trust to energy and luck. We must depend on the pooled intelligence of the best minds. Planned production—that is the only way out. Only the engineers have been doing the basic work but they have not been granted any share or responsibility. They should have not only the responsibility but the rewards as well. He bids the Engineer come out boldly in the open. He should accept the task of mitigating the evils he has helped to establish. To do so, however, he must be allowed to organize and direct the society he has constructed. "You are responsible for it", he tells the engineer; "you are the only group in the community capable of understanding its complicated structure." Inspiring as all this sounds, it is no more than a wish-fulfillment. Though he speaks of the engineering mind as a separate and superior entity, distinguishing it from the mind of the average, timid, overspecialized, and broken-spirited engineer, the distinction is far from convincing. What engineer is also a social engineer with a sound and comprehensive knowledge of socio-economic functions and a thorough understanding of political and human relationships? The engineering mind Chase admires is a conceptional ideal that does not square with the reality. Engineers may be excellent builders, they may not be concerned with profits, they may even be capable of thinking hard and straight, but what guarantee do we have that they can manage the intricate social mechanism any better than those who are at



present in charge? If the greatest need today is for "philosopher engineers", how can they be trained? Where can they be found? Above all, by what means are they to be placed in positions of power?

*A New Deal* (1932) was Stuart Chase's first plunge into the troubled and muddy waters of politics. What, he asks challengingly, is an economic system for, what is it supposed to accomplish? For him a functional society should have one basic aim: to provide as efficiently as possible a means of subsistence for the population. That aim can be accomplished under a system of collectivism as opposed to anarchic competition. If there is one thing experience has taught us, it is that we cannot afford to drift. Man is social-minded and depends largely on coöperative effort. Furthermore, the machine age has created a state of technological tenuousness—a vast interlocking and interdependent complex of forces in which the individual is helpless and which demands collective supervision and control. If breakdown and friction and waste are to be eliminated, collectivism becomes a social and technological imperative.

Now of the three choices that confront us—a revolution, a business dictatorship, and changes within the confines of the law and the flexible limits of the American tradition—he decidedly prefers the third. The odds, he feels, are in its favor. The concerted action of an enlightened and determined body of citizens can compel the government to take over certain powers and make necessary adjustments. Unlike the Marxists with their central doctrine of the class war, Chase has little use for violence. Our specialized industrial society might be damaged beyond hope of recovery. Violent revolution in a machine age is comparable, he thinks, to the administering of a lethal poison. Nor is America psychologically ready to take such a suicidal step. What we require now is, not revolution, but a religion rooted in the spirit of collectivism.

The leadership under the plan as outlined by Stuart Chase will not be provided by labor, which is ignorant and inert. He indulges in no proletarian idolatry. Those reared in the methods of science will have to take the helm. For only they can envisage "an objective scientific control of production and distribution." In

short, he would establish a dictatorship by men of science. If we want freedom, he tells us, we must learn how to control our economic mechanism. Most of the changes proposed, he assures us, can be effected without serious breaches in the Constitution "or profound violation of existing political or economic machinery". Scientific social engineering will concern itself with economic activities, with the coördination of money, men, and machines. There will be no interference with matters strictly private.

Though the plan is obviously a compromise, Chase insists it is not a drug designed to save and prolong the life of capitalism. He would redistribute the national income by means of an income tax, sequester excess profits, and secure control of new investments. He would prefer to see the people as the chief owners of the means of production. But that is really less important than the problem of actual operation and management. At all events, let the plan be tried, he urges. It can be achieved if intelligent Americans unite upon a program of action.

In *The Economy of Abundance* (1934), Stuart Chase attempts to explain the curious paradox that we suffer poverty and want in an age of plenty. How much better off would we be, he exclaims, if the forces of the economy of abundance were allowed to function freely! The application of the scientific method to civilization could usher in an era of general economic well-being. Though he feels that capitalism is doomed, he believes firmly in use property. It belongs to the individual or the family. It is the product of labor and abstinence and sacrifice. "To socialize such property is truly against human nature." Whatever the social program we draft, use property should be safeguarded. Under any regime there would always remain a minimum of strictly private possessions which we would refuse to surrender. But the bulk of commercial and industrial property must be socialized.

Allied to the theme of the socialization of property is Stuart Chase's treatment of a problem that has aroused bitter political controversies. In *Government in Business* (1935), he attempts to determine what part the State must play in the management of society. He repeats his conviction that capitalism is gradually dying. Let those who complain of this situation, he remarks, provide a better way out. "For my part," he declares, "I prefer to

swim the stream and admit public business as the dominating factor in the future. . . ." Public business, unlike socialism, can be achieved without collective ownership of the means of production. The State cannot resist the pressure of the technological advance; the future, he predicts, will bring about some more or less permanent form of collectivism.

As a believer in a functional society he is inclined to suspect that a society based on the instinct or impulse of acquisitiveness cannot long endure in a healthy state. "For twenty years I have watched with close attention the gathering forces which demand more conscious control of the economic complex. Yet I am in no way a rampant individualist. I detest most forms of personal regimentation." As a non-conforming individualist he resents having any authority prescribing what he shall say, think, or do. He believes in freedom and wants as much of it as he can reasonably get. Even as a professional accountant working for corporations, he has steadfastly reserved the right to come and go as he pleased. In spite of this jealous regard for his own freedom, he would not object to certain curtailments of that freedom, if the State were to guarantee his economic security. He would then be willing to make the necessary personal sacrifices. So that the economic activities and institutions falling under the control of public business would not really curb his freedom, and he considers himself a fairly typical example.

The ideas he advances in this volume, *Government in Business*, are not substantially different from those sounded in his previous books. All his statistics, his technical data and skilfully marshaled arguments point to one end: a planned collective economy. This is the technological imperative he so earnestly preaches. There is no truth in the desperate doctrine of the class war. The proletariat, instead of growing more impoverished and oppressed and class-conscious, is being rapidly transformed into a group of technicians. "As the power age gains, the proletariat diminishes. The scientist, technician and engineer seize the controls of production." That is how Chase deflates the dogma of the class struggle. There is to be no final conflict between capitalists and the exploited workers. Marx, writing in the nineteenth century, had no provision of the power age. Marxism, Chase argues, is "essentially

a scarcity philosophy, predicated on the belief that the rich will always rob the poor of a strictly limited total supply of wealth, and that only a proletarian dictatorship can insure a just division." In an economy of abundance this theory holds no validity. Especially in America can the workers achieve their ends by peaceful and legitimate means.

In his latest book, *Rich Land, Poor Land*, Stuart Chase spins a story of epical proportions, material that could stir his imagination, quicken the tempo of his prose. The moral he graphically draws—to waste our natural resources is a criminal waste of our human heritage—is all the more impressive because it is not overtly preached. It is implicit in the text. The facts speak for themselves and he presents them so copiously, so dramatically, that we cannot help but be convinced. We hear the tragic tale of erosion; we see the terrifying dust storms sweep over the land and leave ruin and desolation in their wake. When will America learn, he asks, that this continent is a home, not a mine to be rapidly exhausted in a mad race for profits? If our natural resources are to endure and provide a fuller livelihood for coming generations, we must engage immediately in long-range planning for purposes of conservation. His main reason for writing this book was to make Americans "believe in their grand, broad, beautiful continent."

### III.

The extent of the influence Chase has exerted in his generation is difficult as yet to appraise. He has, it must be conceded, kept the balance even. He had not drummed up spurious crusades. There are no saints or devils in his scheme of things, and the intrusion of ethical or utopian compulsives is kept to a decent minimum. He is aware that Big Business need not be wasteful and evil. On the contrary, as he acknowledges, it often makes for large-scale efficiency. But the crucial problem he is apparently unable to solve is this: will the owners and managers of big business come quietly and reasonably to terms, or will they, by a dictatorial coup, try to steal the whole show? Chase thinks they will have to agree upon a compromise. Capitalism must make a truce with the State that feeds it. Chase optimistically believes that the



battle can be won for the State without the necessity of costly and bloody class warfare. The world, as he sees it, is steadily gravitating towards collectivism.

What, however, of the large percentage of the American people who regard the entrance of the government into business as inherently wrong, who fear it heralds national bankruptcy and ruin, an epidemic of political corruption? This belief, this fear, may be a delusion, but it has to be reckoned with. All Chase can say is that necessity is the paramount and decisive consideration: we shall have to realize that public planning and administration can manage the economy as a whole, that it can grant security to all. That is to say, he fails to solve the formidable psychological problem he has raised—the problem of conversion.

If he does not succeed in overcoming the human difficulties that stand in the way of collectivism, he effectively dissipates the fear of regimentation that some people entertain. After all, regimentation of a certain kind and to a certain extent is necessary and salutary. Our democracy is fundamentally not only political but also in part social. To guarantee economic security is to do no more than extend the concept of democracy to economics and industry. Chase confesses that when he holds economic security in his right hand, and balances it against the ballot in his left, he would exchange "all the political democracy ever heard of, and all the constitutions, and all the founding fathers, for the real democracy of the universal right to be born clean, to grow strong, and not to be crawling on one's belly to a petty tyrant for a job." To attain this happy state he would even consent to an economic dictatorship. But he prefers economic democracy if it can be gained by parliamentary means. He feels there is a solution. Let the public make its wishes felt strongly enough. Let Congress be invested with power to legislate economic control without constitutional checks. All men want is security, employment, peace of mind.

With a great deal that Stuart Chase has to say most men would probably agree. They might question some of his interpretations, the methods by which he hopes to achieve his ends, but they would be inclined to accept many of his major premises. He has received a wide hearing because he is no ranting propagandist. He



does not attack the rich or tilt his lance against the windmills of injustice. His object is not to stir up class hatred. He has been honest, sane, and practical. He has won confidence and succeeded in awakening men's minds where others with more militant doctrines aroused only suspicion and sullen hostility. He has worked in the American tradition of presenting facts, instead of arguing or theorizing.

Outside of the laity, however, his following has been strangely lean. He has gained no important disciples, he has started no distinctive school of thought. Has he been no more than a brilliant journalist writing on economics, no more than a gifted popularizer? Let us see. He has called himself half-humorously but not inaptly a statistical Don Quixote. He is precisely that. He has, as we have seen, a veritable mania for compiling mountains of figures, which he gathers laboriously from divers bureaus, documents, magazines, newspapers, and books. He catalogues these systematically in a filing cabinet, each batch under a different heading, the whole cross-indexed for convenience and efficiency. When he has enough material for a book, all he has to do is assemble his data and assort them in some sort of logical sequence. In short, the road to scientific truth is paved with statistics. In statistics he finds certainty, refuge from vaporous theories and utopian speculations. They form a rock of solid, impregnable meaning in a swirling sea of dubieties. He is in love with the concrete, the quantitative, the measurable. His most important contribution to modern knowledge lies perhaps in his patient and consistent attempt to apply the scientific method to social problems. If social reconstruction is to be carried out in the proper spirit, it must be approached by means of the scientific method, but that method, according to Chase, reduces itself in both sociology and economics largely to statistical combinations and permutations.

Unfortunately statistics are double-edged swords. Within certain contexts they are more reliable than theoretical generalizations, but they, too, lead into error and generalization. For statistics have no significance in and for themselves; standing alone they have no diagnostic or prognostic value. Interpretation is essential if statistics are to be functionally valid. But interpretation in the field of the social sciences presupposes a social norm, a standard of

health and harmony, a conception of the goal sought, a *philosophy* of society. Consumatory termini call for ethical judgments: justice, equality, human rights, culture, civilization, art. Any blueprint, any anatomical study of modern society must include a steadily apprehended conception of the good life. Besides huge heaps of relevant and revealing facts, it must include a vision of the goal of desire and the method of actually attaining that goal.

This is the point at which Chase frequently breaks down. We sympathize, we can understand his determination to avoid emotionally-frightened ideals and illusions. He is not charting a course to Atlantis. He has read the voluminous literature of social reform and found it for the most part a mass of clotted nonsense. From the danger of day-dreaming he would save us and himself. But as we wade through his own contributions, we are not much enlightened nor are we liberated for any definite course of action. He offers no satisfying answer to the question: What is to be done? Negatively he destroys many of the cure-alls that have been recently recommended: Major Douglas's Credit System, the Townsend Old Age Plan, the Epic Plan, Socialism, Communism, Fascism. In a positive sense he seems to be on the side of government control of basic industries, the coördination of economic functions in order to reduce waste, the shortening of the working day. But these are half-way houses on the road. He has still not answered our question. We recall isolated facts that stick like burs in the mind, but no synthesis has resulted, no integration of the complex and conflicting values of social life, no intellectual catharsis. An engineer, an accountant, has shown us the source of the trouble, the nature of the maladjustment; he has done little to suggest a lasting and efficacious remedy. That, he may possibly retort, is not his function. Hence his work must be supplemented by a social philosophy that is comprehensive and organic where his is restricted and specialized.

It is therefore questionable whether his works, stimulating as they are, will endure. First of all, they are too deeply preoccupied with the contemporary situation. He is too deeply involved in the issues of his time. Not that this is necessarily a weakness; it does make for a realistic approach, a sound documented appraisal. But lack of future references, lack of clear end-purpose, tend to

*dare* his books. His studies with their serried armies of figures will grow increasingly obsolescent. They will have outlived their period of usefulness. Connected with this, as has been pointed out, is his failure to think out and think through a far-reaching philosophy of value and social ends. A little less accountancy, a little more philosophic insight would have vitalized his work and given it a unity of structure and spirit it does not possess. He has furnished no system of society that might compare with the system hatched in the brain of a Pareto, a Karl Marx, a Jeremy Bentham. We come back to our original contention: Chase is not an original or creative thinker. He is the accountant of our social dynamics. His concern is primarily not so much with fundamentals as with facts, figures, lines of energy. He has never tackled the problem of how the technicians, whom he has referred to mystically as a class apart, a kind of priesthood, will secure the power which they will require if society is to be run according to his plans. Chase will probably be chiefly remembered as a highly talented actuarial journalist writing on economics in a neotechnic age.

*by Nancy Telfair*

### THORN TREE

There is a thorn tree in my yard  
Not like my neighbors' trees;  
I do not know how it came there  
By what wind's ministries.  
There is a strange thing in my heart,  
Its name is love and faith;  
It has three thorns to crucify—  
Unkindness, grief, and death.

*by John Ritchey*

## HOSTELRY OF EARTH

How inexorably will we be lost,  
When hearts that tear at sight  
Of trees, sliding of light,  
Shall in the end dissolve in clay;  
How reckon on that day,  
Remember on that night?

How shall we build,  
Oh hostelry of earth?  
For this liquid present then?  
The transient, shifting now,  
When the brittle bird  
Is hardly on the bough?  
Taste lips, taste wine again,  
Smooth hair from the brow,  
From the brow that will cup the rain,  
If the rain descend,  
After the end?

Muse on this moment,  
Muse on the allotted span,  
Given to man,  
Suck the ripe juice,  
Reject the lifeless pulp,  
Put it to some darker use  
Beyond the lips?

We are undone by years  
That slip across the earthy countenance;  
We are undone by tears.  
And what we would renounce  
Most singularly we own.

We shall be hurled home,  
For it has been contrived  
Not as going, but arrived.

There will be something there we know  
Wherein the crumbled flesh may sink  
To a green oblivion and go;  
Or being content to shrink  
On a vaster shore,  
Taste natural salt once more.

Not, this, that rusts the heart,  
Not this pain that breaks apart  
Flesh, nerve and narrow bone,  
It was arranged too long ago  
That we should lie at last alone.

We would explore how subtly born  
Is fruit of wheat and corn;  
Finger grass, eat of air,  
Lean across the night to stare  
At stars gone wilful in a sky of June;  
Touch locust blossoms,  
Build the fresh rose,  
And feel Time go—

And Oh, pelucid world.  
Globular, luminous,  
How to know, how to see,  
That these we knew, were Life,  
But never us!

We are too young to know,  
Too lost in spring,  
Too early sprung,  
And everything  
Too rare upon the sight  
To bear the signet of this light.



*by L. Robert Lind*

SONNET

as it might be written by a passionate disciple  
of Prof. T. S. E\*\*\*t

Seek out again the seventeenth century,  
Embalm your soul in its precise emotion;  
Be adulant of Pope and Popery,  
Render dead Dryden dessicate devotion.  
Shun the intelligible as a base cliché,  
Donne is our god, our gospel Metaphysick;  
Grow involute in wisdom day by day,  
Let us be High Church — Classic — Royalistick.

We have seen life from sordid cellar-doors,  
From baroque drawing-rooms where words are shallow,  
And charm is chatter's guerdon; lo, the sores  
Of Time will heal but with the mind's rank tallow  
Superimposed. Da. Da. Flee we to Dante  
Where (with a trot) we'll play : : the scholar dilettante.

*by Lodwick Hartley*

## SEQUENCE

### I.

The body is a book of history,  
Reliving passions spent so long ago  
That pains I bear are purest mockery  
And joys scarce warmer than the drifted snow.  
This new love must I carry as a lamp  
To burn me as I vainly seek to hide?  
My soul shall be no hostage in the camp  
Of that which is the canker's final bride.—  
And yet the reason is a fragile thing  
(This too the augury of man foretells),  
Stern logic often takes a mounting wing,  
And resolution dons the cap and bells.  
What profit that the eons ceaseless turn!  
The heart, a hopeless dunce, can never learn.

### II.

The year's remotest treasures are the tears  
I shed because my heart's own dearest gift,  
Compounded of my burning hopes and fears,  
Lay colder in your hand than winter's drift.  
The days had fast sped by before I saw  
I'd plucked a lifeless thorn from out the snow  
And held it to my breast in hope the thaw  
Would give it strength and make it live and grow.  
No fakir ever thrived upon his pain  
Or gloated on its surfeit more than I—  
Nor ever did a blustery April rain  
More quickly clear the cob-webs from the sky.  
But if my body seem now whole and sound,  
Beneath my pride there lies a gaping wound!

by G. Ripley Cutler

## CAN CAPITALISM SURVIVE?

SIX years afterwards, it is easy to forget the reality of 1932. It is easy to forget the universal feeling of helplessness in the presence of an economic crisis that had gripped the life of the nation like an incurable disease. Here is the plain truth of the matter: most people believed that the country stood on the brink of revolution. The gloomiest forebodings were expressed as to the outlook for the winter of 1932—1933. Riots, acts of violence, even the armed overthrow of the government, were predicted. A fair sample of this state of mind may be found in a memorandum to President Hoover, accompanying a letter signed by men of the highest eminence in the business world. The memorandum began as follows: "In the opinion of many thoughtful men, time is now the essence of our economic salvation. Are we to sink in the mire, overwhelmed in the chaos of repudiations, bankruptcies and receiverships?" No anti-climax can conceal the anguish behind the question. The President himself, in a statement to his Welfare and Relief Conference meeting in September, 1932, pictured the depression in a sentence: "In the meantime the suffering about us is so intense and the demands upon our sympathy so penetrating that often, in so dark a picture, we can see no ray of light and no trace of alleviating accomplishment".

To such a pass had the existing economic system brought the people of this country.

Does anyone think that American civilization could support the recurrence of a similar crisis? Even though the system itself may not have been wholly to blame,—granting that the severity of the depression was aggravated by speculative excesses, and by errors of political leadership—it would be folly to assume that so complete a breakdown of the economic machine could have been due to external causes rather than to defects in the machine itself. Now, before it is too late, it is a matter of urgency that

business leadership should seek out the defects and correct them. Capitalism can be saved only by its friends.

The dyed-in-the-wool capitalist who owes his bread and butter to the system of private initiative should be willing to devote a little time to the study of Capitalism. Let us examine for a moment, then, the structure of this imposing, unstable edifice. For if a building rocks in the wind, it is possible that some of its foundations are shaky.

## I.

### *Definitions.*

Capital, from the economists' standpoint, is synonymous with tangible wealth. Capital is the entire mass of goods existing at a particular moment. Industrial plants, machinery, industries and finished goods, houses, money—all are capital. The distinction commonly made between fixed capital and working capital, important as it is from a practical standpoint, is extraneous to the present discussion.

Strictly speaking, perhaps, Capitalism should be defined as that stage of economic development in which capital (wealth already accumulated) comes to play the preponderant part in production. In this sense of the word, Capitalism would find its embodiment in any large-scale industrial or commercial enterprise. A tractor factory in Russia would be a capitalistic, a small farm in France or New England an agrarian, mode of production. Another possible approach to a definition of Capitalism would be to say that Capitalism exists when capital, instead of being at the service of labor, takes labor into its service. This definition would associate Capitalism with the wage or salary system; Capitalism would exist wherever wages are paid, whether in Fascist Italy or Soviet Russia.

By general usage, however, the word Capitalism has come to connote a good deal more than a method of large-scale production where laborers receive a wage but have no claim to the finished product. Most people when they say Capitalism mean the prevailing economic, and even to some extent, the political system of western Europe and the United States. Used in this sense the word

carries a number of very important implications, some of them economic, some social or juridical in character.

For example, it is commonly understood that a capitalistic régime is a régime of free enterprise, where the people are at liberty to work or not to work, and where the production of wealth results from the voluntary efforts of individuals. Business enterprises conducted by the State, however "capitalistic" they may be in the sense that they are operated on a large scale and pay wages, are regarded as alien to the capitalistic tradition. Although the scope of the state's participation in business is steadily widening, both here and abroad, this trend is condemned as socialistic by all good capitalists.

A second feature implicit in the accepted idea of Capitalism is that goods are produced to be exchanged, in the hope of making a profit. Production for use—raising one's own food and making one's own clothes,—has come to play a very small part in our present-day economy. Practically all goods are produced to be sold. Only in the case of State enterprises, conducted for the public interest, are goods or services purposely sold at or below cost. Here again the businesses operated by the State constitute an exception to the general rule. Aside from charitable and philanthropic institutions all other entrepreneurs, it is safe to say, are actuated by the hope of profit.

The fact that under Capitalism goods are produced to be sold implies almost as a matter of necessity the existence of a money and credit economy. Exchange by barter has proved to be so cumbersome that even primitive societies have usually evolved some form of money (not necessarily the precious metals). It is impossible to think of Capitalism without thinking of money, the instrument of exchange and measure of value.

A characteristic aspect of Capitalism is the method by which the distribution of wealth is effected. This indeed is the very heart of Capitalism, that the State does not divide the wealth, but that each individual competes for as much as he can legally get, by voluntary bargaining in a free market. The term, a "free market" is subject to qualification: prices regulated by the State, minimum wages decreed by the State, prices or wages firmly established by custom if not by law, constitute an important body of



limitations to the freedom of the market. It is none the less the prevailing rule of Capitalism that products are sold and services rewarded at the market price fixed by supply and demand.

The Capitalistic régime, finally, has kept as one of its distinguishing features the institution of private property. The rights of private ownership in property, although today attenuated with respect to certain types of wealth, have on the whole been zealously preserved and fostered by the legal codes of the capitalistic countries. The right of absolute possession during the owner's lifetime has been completed by the right of free disposal after death. Thus custom and the law have conferred upon private property the dignity of perpetuity. Under the capitalistic régime existing inequalities in the distribution of wealth tend to become permanent.

These then are the pillars of the capitalist society:—

The application of power, machinery, and scientific management to the large-scale production and distribution of goods.

Voluntary production through individual initiative.

Production for profit.

The use of money and credit to facilitate exchanges.

The distribution of wealth through competition in the market-place, as regulated by the law of supply and demand.

The institution of private property.

## II.

### *The Rules of the Game.*

The operations of the economic system in Western Europe and America, particularly during the 19th century, have been analyzed by some of the most brilliant contemporary thinkers. From the economic history of this period—economic history representing the experience of generations of business men through repeated cycles of good and bad times,—as interpreted in the writings of men such as Ricardo, J. B. Say, John Stuart Mill, Karl Marx, it is possible to draw a number of conclusions as to the conditions under which capitalism works best.

It goes without saying that at all times and in all places, sufficient goods to permit a high standard of living will not be pro-

duced unless civic order is maintained. The same thing would be true under any economic system. It is obvious that the production of goods even on a very small scale requires planning ahead and that planning ahead requires security. When looters are in the streets, men cannot even go to work.

A second condition indispensable to the success of Capitalism is international peace. This condition has been repeatedly denied in practice and sometimes even in theory by the leaders of capitalist states. The idea that a war, provided it is small and victorious, will bring wealth as well as glory to the participants is one that autocratic rulers are readily inclined to foster. Whatever modicum of truth this doctrine may have possessed in the 17th and 18th centuries has largely disappeared in an age of totalitarian states and instantaneous, world-wide communications. Today a small war is little more than a prelude to a great war. As for a great war, the lesson of the last one would seem clear. Under modern conditions, a great war means privation to neutrals and ruin to belligerents.

Order and peace are political conditions. There are other conditions, economic in character, which by common consent seem to promote the general well-being under a capitalist régime.

The division of labor, admirably described by the founder of economic science—whereby three or four men working with specialized skills at the different parts of a single task can produce from ten to a hundred times as much as any one of them could do alone is integral to Capitalism. The use of mechanical power and labor-saving machinery carries the process of specialization to its logical conclusion. Capitalism, which by definition is a régime that uses tools in production, is committed to the responsibility of employing with the utmost efficiency the full resources of modern science.

The advantages of the division of labor, and the use of machines and scientific methods are that they permit a manifold and abundant production of goods at low cost. Although these advantages were conclusively demonstrated by Adam Smith one hundred and fifty years ago, business men of today, while paying lip-service to the virtue of cheap production in other people's businesses, do not always favor it in their own. It is one of the paradoxes of

Capitalism—a system whose watch-word has been cheapness and whose *raison d'être* has been the progressive reduction of costs—that some of its most rabid supporters cling desperately to industrial methods involving high costs and obsolete technical processes.

Abundant production at low cost is, nevertheless, the true function of capitalism, as indeed of any economic system. The classical economists long since pointed out the unexpected benefits which should theoretically, at least, result from cheap production. Cheap production obviously makes possible low selling prices, although it does not *assure* low selling prices unless effective competition prevails. At the same time, low-cost, efficient production, with a high degree of productivity per employee may often permit—although it does not guarantee—the payment of high wages. The truth of this statement was challenged by Marx and Lasalle, who claimed that through the forces of competition among its own surplus numbers, labor would never be paid anything above a bare subsistence wage. Nevertheless the facts show that in countries where labor is strongly organized and where the public conscience is concerned with social problems, the payment of high wages by big business is of frequent occurrence.

Notwithstanding these favorable possibilities, the economic Utopia of low prices for all commodities and high wages for all employments remains far away. The obvious dilemma involved in reducing costs, while increasing wages, an important element of costs, has hitherto yielded only partial, fragmentary solutions. Any method whereby costs can be reduced without cutting wages must deserve serious consideration from the friends of Capitalism. The classical economists have pointed out one condition entirely unrelated to wage levels that is favorable to a cheapening in costs of production. That condition is simply that the *market for the goods produced should be as broad as possible*. The reason, of course, is the relative fixity of overhead expenses, whose effect on total costs of production is greatly diluted if spread over a large number of units.

In agriculture the law of diminishing returns may hold good; in manufacturing, generally speaking, the larger the output the lower the unit cost. Granting an equality in raw materials and natural

resources, economic science declares that Capitalism should flourish best where a large population lives within the same political boundaries—in other words, where there is a large free-trade area. The economic development of the United States as compared with a group of European countries of similar size supports this doctrine.

While it is not within the power of the individual producer to negotiate tariff agreements or annex new territories, in order to increase the number of people with whom he might trade freely, it is sometimes within his power to raise the wages of his employees. Manufacturers of \$10,000 automobiles, of course, may find it hard to see how they can enlarge the market for their product by raising the wages of their workmen. It is evident, nevertheless, that the ultimate effect of a sufficient number of wage increases in various branches of industry if continued over a sufficient length of time will be to raise the whole standard of living. And no one will deny that a population with a high standard of living commands more buying power and constitutes a wider market than an equal number of savages.

A subject that has been analyzed with the greatest care by economists of all schools has been the functioning of exchange under Capitalism, the methods whereby prices are determined and the whole mechanism of the so-called law of supply and demand. The operations of the market-place have even been reduced to a series of equations, whereby economists of an algebraical turn of mind have demonstrated their theories with the rigor of mathematical law. Without attempting to follow this line of reasoning in its more recondite phases one may state the orthodox doctrine of economic science concerning prices as follows:—The free play of supply and demand in a freely competitive market will produce a price of equilibrium, a price at which the quantity of goods offered can be sold. And as a corollary of this proposition, economists maintain that only a free market can produce a price that can clear the market. Theoretical as this notion of an equilibrium price may sound to business men familiar with the minute-to-minute fluctuations of prices on the stock and commodity exchanges, the facts of history nevertheless indicate that the concept is a sound one. Experiments with pegged prices have almost al-

ways ended in failure, either because of an acute shortage or an impossible surplus in the production of the commodity in question. A pegged price may be fair and equable to begin with, but after a time becomes hopelessly out of line with changing conditions. The constant variations of prices in a free market represent a continuous series of adaptations to the changing pressures of supply and demand. A free market, therefore, possesses the dynamic stability of a machine in motion. Such a market, like an automobile on the open road, deviates continually by slight amounts from the straight line; yet ninety-nine times out of a hundred it accomplishes its purpose and reaches its goal.

In summary, one may recapitulate as follows some of the precepts which wisdom and common sense indicate should govern the operations of a capitalist system;—

Peace, between states as well as individuals, is necessary to give time for planning and security for the execution of plans.

The efficient use of power and machinery permits low-cost production.

Low-cost production makes possible low prices and high wages.

The wider the market, the cheaper the production.

The higher the standard of living, the wider the market.

Only a free market is a stable market.

### III.

#### *The Case for Capitalism.*

While the origins of Capitalism may be traced to the time of the Renaissance and the Reformation, the system as we know it did not begin to take shape until the Industrial Revolution. During this period the face of the world and the life of the peoples have experienced an extraordinary transformation, although it may well be questioned whether all the changes have been of a salutary character. Let us see, however, what may be said in favor of Capitalism—in favor, that is, of voluntary production, individual initiative, the wage system and the various factors mentioned in the first section of this article. Certain economists of the mid-nineteenth century found a good deal to say, and at times



grew lyrical over the providential harmonies of a system that harnessed together the selfish purposes and conflicting interests of each individual to promote the common weal. Modern writers, however, are inclined to view these divine arrangements with a more skeptical eye.

The theoretical case for Capitalism is not lacking in strength. It rests primarily upon the hypothesis already outlined, that big factories and farms with modern machinery will be able to produce an abundance of goods at low cost. Thus the capitalist method of production should usually assure low costs and low selling prices for the articles produced, while at the same time occasionally permitting—although not assuring,—the payment of high wages. Enlarging further upon this theme, the proponents of Capitalism have tried to show that under a wholly competitive régime (such as does not now exist anywhere) profits and the rate of interest would tend towards lower levels, and eventually towards complete disappearance. Many forms of rent (considering rent as any special advantage in production resulting either from invention, talent, or geographical situation) might also be eliminated, while ground rent could perhaps be confiscated. Thereby those factors in the cost of production—particularly rents and profits—which have always been something of a bugbear to the liberal economists might either disappear or be turned to the public good. The ultimate outcome of these trends has been envisioned by John Stuart Mill in his picture of a stationary state, where abundance prevails and progress has given way to a beneficent stagnation.

Speaking from the record, it is a fact that during the past one hundred and fifty years Capitalism has built up in certain countries an industrial, agricultural and extractive plant capable of turning out enough goods to support a high standard of living for the entire population. This is a considerable achievement, since under no other economic system has anything like an abundance of goods for all been seen. On the other hand, it must be noted that at no time nor place—not even in the United States, and not even during 1929,<sup>1</sup>—has the capitalistic system in actual perform-

<sup>1</sup>See *America's Capacity to Consume*, a publication of The Brookings Institution.

ance developed the general well-being that it is theoretically capable of producing. On the contrary, in the best year that this country has ever seen, sixty percent of this country's families (it seems safe to say) did not have enough to eat or wear.

Capitalism, in other words, has met with partial success, but only as a mode of production. The distributive processes under Capitalism have still to justify themselves. Let business men take note of the fact as a possible weak spot in the capitalistic structure.

*[to be continued]*

*by Nancy Telfair*

### WAITING

Her whole body was listening,  
Her soul ran out to meet—  
Each sound might be his footstep  
Where hundreds walked the street.  
There are more years in minutes  
Than calendars record  
While loneliness sits waiting  
An understanding word.

by Grace Stone

## TENNESSEE:

### SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC LABORATORY

THE spade and the plow, rather than the steam shovel and the motor-driven tractor, have been suggested countless times as the proper tools with which people could dig their way out of a depression. The cry "back to the soil" is reiterated with a cyclical regularity whenever the existing order of society becomes sick and economic maladjustments are real, not imaginary. To despairing men and women suffering the pangs of hunger and the fears of uncertainty when jobs are gone, there is something appealing in an agrarian economy promising integrity, independence, and harmonious living direct from the land. When Thomas Hughes wanted "to begin the world anew" in 1880, his prescription was "to discover some place on the face of this broad planet where one might set to work in the best conditions" and there "to put spade into the ground again for food".<sup>1</sup> Strangely enough, the ground selected for his ambitious purpose was a remotely high spot in the Cumberland plateau where the settler "could live up to his ideals with least jostling and give his neighbor the right to his own legs".<sup>2</sup> Why his choice should have led him to a limited area in the rugged Tennessee region may seem a bit amazing unless one is familiar with the fact that during the nineteenth century this southern State served uniquely as a laboratory wherein various social and economic experiments not only for Americans but for several European countries were carried on.

To this section of the United States where vast resources were scarcely touched, President Monroe first called the attention of the nation when he ordered an investigation of the southeastern

<sup>1</sup>Hughes, Thomas. *Rugby, Tennessee: being some account of the settlements founded on the Cumberland Plateau by the Board of Aid to Land Ownership*. New York. Macmillan. 1881.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

corner of the state and the adjoining territory now occupied by the giant TVA. One statement quoted from the subsequent report presented by the Secretary of War to Congress in 1828 is significant in this study: "No section of the country is better provided than this with copious never failing streams, as also with abundance of fuel; none possesses more extensive means to associate agricultural with manufacturing industry."<sup>4</sup> The mere suggestion of diversification of employment was widely divergent from the general plantation policy of the South in which Tennessee was participating. At that early date, however, the government was calling attention to the fact that a program of varied manufactures combined with an agricultural economy could assure all the potentialities for the good life. Here, more than anywhere else, every man was supposed to find occupation according to his talents and enjoy resources according to his industry. Nor were the native residents blind to the possibilities of attracting to their State those who were caught in the whirling maelstrom of industrial complications, particularly abroad where the alarming discontent of multitudes was cause enough to make them ready listeners.

Accordingly, in 1842, J. Gray Smith published in London a brief tract describing in extravagant terms, "East Tennessee, U. S. A.", addressing it "to the surplus population crying in vain for labour and for bread, to the thousands who are willing to quit the land of their nativity and in lieu of visiting Southern Europe with its vices and dissipations, visit the East Tennessee mountain peaks, which 'Manfred' himself would have delighted in."<sup>5</sup>

Smith, aware of the urgent need of both honest laborers and enterprising capitalists in the state, proceeded to appeal to the man with money to invest, to the "annuitant and legatee", the mechanic and the operative, thousands of whom were "lacking income and employment".<sup>6</sup> "Let the latter classes indenture themselves to farmers, manufacturers and mechanics who are emigrating to America", he advised. "Let the amount for them be refunded out

<sup>4</sup>"Report of the Board of Internal Improvement, submitted from the Secretary of War, Hon. James Barbour and William Tell Poussin, Topographical Engineer Assistant". Doc. 284. May 14, 1828.

<sup>5</sup>Smith, J. Gray. *A Brief Historical, Statistical and Descriptive Review of East Tennessee. U. S. A.* London, 1842. p. IX.

<sup>6</sup>Smith included a list of "labourers, mechanics and others that are required and would find ready employment in Tennessee." It is most significant because

of the wages and in a few years the poor worker can become the proprietor of a small farm." For those who could afford to buy outright, prospects were especially alluring. "To the capitalist the East Tennessee land offers great advantages, since, in lieu of investing in Foreign Securities and State Bonds, yielding a return of from five to seven and a half per cent, the Tennessee lands, even under an imperfect mode of farming, more than double these returns. And to the slow but practical farmer who with a capital of from one to ten thousand pounds sterling, is enriching and embellishing the lands of another, Tennessee presents great inducement, for with the latter amount, he may purchase a most princely domain, . . . and he will there rank, if he is a man of conduct and integrity, with the much envied magnate of his fatherland." In contrast with the masses sunk in squalid wretchedness and poverty, Smith pictured a new society well fed, well clothed, contented and happy.

Perhaps the name of Tennessee did "have a magical influence on the minds of people",<sup>8</sup> as a prospective newcomer wrote to Hermann Bokum, State Commissioner of Immigration, but the more powerful magnet was the goal held out before them—the

he is referring to businesses, shops and mills privately owned and operated. pp. 50-51.

"Farm labourers

Dairy maids

Scotch shepherds; their dogs would also be requisite

Millwrights would find great encouragement.

Wheelwrights; Wagon and Coach makers,

Blacksmiths much wanted.

Shoe Makers, who can make either coarse, fine, or Ladies' shoes.

Tailors, the price of making a Coat is seven dollars, besides trimmings, and living at half the price it is in England.

Hatters, that can make either a coarse or fine hat.

Saddlers and Harness makers. much wanted

Coopers and Small Ware Coopers

Chair makers, much wanted

Potters, being an abundance of Potters Clay, and an unequalled demand for ware

Millers, who thoroughly understand their business

Stone Masons, Bricklayers, and Painters, but the three not in great numbers.

Tanners, who understand their business in all its branches.

Braziers and Tinmen, much wanted

Persons of the above Trades, who have capital, will, of course, benefit accordingly. A dollar may be reckoned at Four shillings and Fourpence sterling."

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup>*Appendix to House Journal. Tennessee 1869-69. pp. 82-106.*



individual ownership of a few acres whose "fertile meadows, bold limpid streams, ever-green pastures", and prolific gardens promised "every requisite for comfort, convenience, and pleasure."

#### I. SWISS COLONISTS IN GRUNDY COUNTY

Such statements, published abroad in both English and German brought results. In Switzerland particularly, where manufactures had increased to gigantic proportions, there was, in 1844, a general stagnation of business, an over-production of machine-made goods, a decline in the trade of Swiss articles, and much unrest. Then too a partial failure of crops and ascending prices caused dire distress among the farmers and laboring classes. The government, fully aware of its duties toward these discouraged men and women, sought to relieve the desperate situation by urging and assisting all who cared to emigrate to do so. A commission, created for that specific purpose, gave cordial welcome to the Tennessee Colonization Company which was "occupied with the founding of a colony in the North American State of Tennessee."<sup>10</sup> The representatives appeared in Switzerland opportunely, for fifty-one applicants, feeling that "prospects in the old home town did not look so bright", had already turned their thoughts toward the United States, where the greatest incentive for the ambitious emigrant, free or at least cheap land, was abundant. Swiss officials, anxious to keep close check on those who were willing to venture into the unknown, had no intention of turning loose a band of worthless paupers and criminals. Hence, selections were made largely from "farmers or men whose interests were for the most part agricultural, preferring the country and village to the city."<sup>11</sup> After proper investigation of the Tennessee agents' credentials, the Commission came to an agreement with those who sought egress from the homeland, and the first vouchers for transactions of the *Tennessee Colonisationsgesellschaft*, August 19, 1845, set forth a plan for organized emigration. According to the resolutions adopted a few were to go to Tennessee later that Fall to try out the climate

<sup>10</sup>Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

<sup>11</sup>Faust, Albert. *Guide to Materials for American History in Swiss and Austrian Archives*. p. 133.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 57.

and look over the prospects. The final arrangements, best seen in toto as the Swiss-Austrian archives have preserved them, read as follows:

Article 763. Complying with the injunction enjoined upon them, the Commission first of all asked those desirous of migrating, who of them were prepared and willing to leave with the first transport. And as nearly all declared themselves ready, the Commission had to choose some. They directed their choice in part at those individuals most capable of purchasing land with their own means, namely, according to their share in the common treasury; in part at those who on account of their large families would have most difficulty getting along here during the winter. For immediate migration then there five families, 24 individuals in all; namely, the family of Andreas Kron, Jr., consisting of nine members; that of Joseph Vollmer, six members of the Catholic faith; that of Christ. Brei, three members; that of Simon Schmid, 3 members, and lastly that of Ciprian Fischer, dyer, also consisting of 3 members. Only after most urgent pleas was the last mentioned permitted to go along on account of the exceedingly small amount of personal possessions which he could offer. He was informed that he could go only upon condition that he furnish sufficient surety, which, in the event he should return, would repay the amount advanced to him. In so far as the citizen-group favored such a principle, the commission proposed that the common property of Simon Schmid, which would become free at his departure, should be kept by the city for about 5 years, the proceeds of which were to cover the amount advanced Schmid and Fischer for the purchase of land. As for those who departed with this transport, collectively they had in their treasury as much as was necessary for the purchase of land:

Andreas Kron, Gulden 51 Kronen 50  
J. Vollmer, Gulden 30 Kronen 54  
Chr. Brei, Gulden 43

The total expenditure, falling as a burden upon the city treasury, for the 24 people migrating, both for the trip and for the purchase of land, amounted to 2,304 Gulden, 15 Kronen, standard currency.

The Tennessee Company for colonization is to have charge of the transporting of the same from Wallenstadt to the very spot, arrangements for which the agents present had already drawn up in a compact for sailing. In accordance with their order, the Commission drew up a contract between the praise-

worthy city and the colonization company, wherein were stated the following conditions: half of the cost of transportation shall be paid upon proof of embarkation of the emigrants at Antwerp, the other half upon statement of their arrival either at Charleston or New Orleans, and the purchase price of the land to be occupied by the colonists shall be paid upon delivery of an attested copy of the formal deed of sale to the authorities of the place. Inasmuch as the colonist should leave the land assigned them, this land is to become the property of the city. Furthermore, the company's agent in Tennessee shall collect from the colonists for the (native) city the amount advanced them; this money is to be paid back in instalments over a period of 5 years after the colonists have had possession of the land for 5 years. Lastly, the company is obliged to buy, during the year 1846, an additional 250 acres of the same land at the same price for further settlement. This last point has been stipulated because the price of land will increase about one-half next year. In addition, the contract with the emigrants themselves is yet to be closed. Finally, the reporter remarked that the emigrants had expressed the wish that since they had to pay for their food until they reached Mannheim (in accordance with the sailing agreement) that they take a little ready currency along. After reading the draft of the sailing pact as well as the contract with the company, and after being convinced of the reliability of the above decisions, it was decided:

"To accept the recommendations of the committee with a vote of thanks for their trouble and efforts, and to give the emigrants as traveling 'spending money' a sum of 50 Gulden to be divided among the 24 passengers." Aug. 19, 1845.<sup>11</sup>

Among these anxious emigrants, there were no political grievances to settle, no revolutionary doctrines to establish. Economic security was the prime motive, and the method of obtaining their end was about as primitive as it could be. Grütli, in Grundy County, "2,300 feet above sea-level and about 11 miles or two and one-half hours distant from Tracy City",<sup>12</sup> was their new home. Far away from factory smoke and noise, in a solitude of quiet beauty their struggle for existence began. New climate, new agricultural, geographical, and geological features of the country

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.* "Vouchers for transactions". Translated from German text, pp. 132—136.

<sup>12</sup>Steinbach, Adelrich. *Geschichte und Leben der Schweizer-Kolonien in den Vereinigten Staaten von Nord-Amerika*. New York, 1889. pp. 162—171.

brought difficulties which only the pioneer knows. In fact, the original colony would have expired had not Peter Staub, formerly of the Canton of Glarus but then of Knoxville, become vitally concerned about his own countrymen and with the aid of General-Consul Hitz in Washington, D. C., helped to revive the colony. To this isolated community, better roads were then built, little parcels of the colony land were sold to the families to cultivate, and the outlook brightened. Renewed energy behind the spade and the plow produced better "maize, rye, wheat, potatoes, fruits, vegetables, and grapes".<sup>14</sup> "The cheap lands and excellent high-way pasturage" proved advantageous factors. State officials commended the Swiss who had "made some excellent crops of clover and the grasses in the Cumberland mountain soil."<sup>15</sup> Many farmers owned twenty to thirty head of cattle and two horses. Almost everyone had his own wine cellar. A few adept in the woodcarving craft which they had learned in Switzerland, continued to produce their wares, for which they found "paying markets in the near-lying water-places Bersheba Springs, Mount Eagle, and Tullahoma."<sup>16</sup>

From a mere handful the colony grew to "appromixately 400, of whom only seventy were native, the remainder Swiss."<sup>17</sup> The economic conditions governing their lives were far from complicated. The worker did not sell his labor power to the industrialists; he did not engage in social production. Each man labored in his own shop, laid down his own conditions for his employment, and usually in conjunction with his cottage or labor, ran a small subsistence farm. Economically he was an independent producer. A coöperative society established a shop where the colonists could get at cost the necessities of life which they could not raise. An agricultural union, consisting of twenty members, gave advice to the farmers and helped in the purchase of tools. To improve the social status of the group, a "school society guided the building of a lovely schoolhouse and took care of good instruction . . . In

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup>Killebrew, J. B., *Tennessee: the Home for Intelligent Immigrants*. 1879. p.13.

<sup>16</sup>Steinach, Adelrich, *Geschichte und Leben der Schweizer-Kolonien in den Vereinigten Staaten von Nord-Amerika*. [Some of the wood-carving by these Swiss colonists may be seen in All Saints' Chapel of the University of the South at Sewanee, Tennessee.] New York, 1889, p. 163.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 163.



a roomy church Pastor Warren performed the service of God."<sup>18</sup> For the cultivation of sociableness and congeniality, a mixed chorus was organized; then a rifle club, and finally a woman's club that functioned primarily in the conducting of a youth festival (1884) and in the opening of a new school (1889).

When Ambassador Frey visited them in 1883, he expressed great joy to learn of the colony's rapid advance, its population having doubled in the last two years. "Instead of a blockhouse, now stood dwellings, schoolhouse and church, postoffice and other signs of civilization."<sup>19</sup> Laborious efforts in gardens and vineyards had meant paying returns. At New Orleans, two of their number received prizes for their agricultural exhibits and superior wine made from a variety of native grapes which the growers had found better suited to the climate and soil of Grundy County than the vines they had brought with them from Switzerland. Also considerable initiative was shown in "their attention to the rearing of silk worms, in which project they had met success."<sup>20</sup>

An interested contemporary, viewing the colony at the peak of its development, spoke of it thus: "There is a Swiss Colony in Grundy County, Tennessee, which seems like a part of a foreign country, so perfectly have they kept their native habits and customs, and style of architecture in the building of their little cottages. There are carvers there whose quaint work finds ready sale. Market gardening is a feature of the colony, and those who can talk English take the produce to town and sell it. Their wines have taken several premiums, and it is a rare treat to go through their well kept vineyards. One of the remarkable phases of life there is the great age to which they attain, there being several centenarians among them and nonagenarians not being at all uncommon. The mountains surrounding them, while not so high or grand as their native Alps, are sufficiently steep to keep them from feeling lonely for the sight of their native hills, and none of them

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup>Steinbach, Adelrich, *Geschichte und Leben der Schweizer-Kolonien in den Vereinigten Staaten von Nord-Amerika*. New York, 1889, p. 164.

<sup>20</sup>McWhirter, A. J. *Revised Hand-Book of Tennessee*. Nashville, 1885. pp. 65-66.



has ever returned to Switzerland, although a number of them have grown quite wealthy, and could go if they wished."<sup>21</sup>

From such an estimate, it would seem as if the Swiss commissioners had pronounced a sort of benediction upon the eager group, for in parting they had said, "Your success now depends upon yourselves."<sup>22</sup> Accustomed to individual responsibility, hard work, and strict economy, the Grütli settlers had struggled along over a period of years, eventually achieving a certain degree of success as laborers, craftsmen and farmers, in which capacity some were highly valued. Four similar Swiss colonies of lesser importance were established,<sup>23</sup> but in their early days before the War their progress too was negligible.

[to be continued]

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<sup>21</sup>*The Coming Nation*. No. 52. April 28, 1894. p. 3.

<sup>22</sup>Faust, Albert. *Guide to Materials for American History in Swiss and Austrian Archives*, p. 67.

<sup>23</sup>Steinach, Adelrich, *Geschichte und Leben der Schweizer-Kolonien in den Vereinigten Staaten von Nord-Amerika*. Warburg, Morgan Co.; Winchester, Franklin Co.; Newbern, Dyer Co.; South Pittsburg, Marion Co. p. 170. The census report of 1850 recorded 266 Swiss in Tennessee; of 1860, 566.

by Madeleine B. Stern

## AMERICA: PARADISE OR PARADOX?

### PROPAGANDA OR ART? III

VINCENT Sheean refers in *Personal History* (1935) to "the complications in the whole system of organized injustice by which few govern many, . . . and the greater part of the human race has to live in filth and starvation to maintain an artificial system of profit".<sup>1</sup> American writers who propagandize for a more or less radical way out of capitalism must expose these complications before they can prescribe their panaceas.

In a rough and general way, the most pernicious disease of American capitalism is diagnosed by authorities as "Paradox". The basic paradox, analysed time and again, is our twentieth-century technical advancement superimposed upon our nineteenth-century pioneer economy, and rugged individualist psychology. To this antithesis James Rorty adds the "technological and financial adventurousness of our gambler-entrepreneurs and their economic and political conservatism",<sup>2</sup> and reiterates the paradox pointed out by Stuart Chase: our productive power coupled with inadequate distribution. It is not merely a limited characteristic which Kendrick and Arnett exposed in their statement, "The South is rich in resources and capacities but exceedingly poor in its method of developing them."<sup>3</sup> In financial matters the paradox seems equally glaring. There have been writers less Left than Earl Browder who have seen that "some five hundred of the richest families in the country literally own or control the productive wealth of the entire land".<sup>4</sup> Less universal, but

<sup>1</sup>Vincent Sheean: *Personal History*, New York, Doubleday, Doran, 1935, 403 pages. See page 396.

<sup>2</sup>James Rorty: *Where Life Is Better, an unsentimental journey*, New York, Reynal and Hitchcock, 1936, 383 pages. See page 10.

<sup>3</sup>Benjamin B. Kendrick and Alex M. Arnett: *The South Looks at Its Past*, Chapel and Hill, University of Carolina Press, 1935, 196 pages. See page 189.

<sup>4</sup>Earl Browder: *What Is Communism?*, New York, Vanguard, 1936, 254 pages. See page 129.

equally suggestive of the disease, is that dialogue quoted by Anna Rochester,<sup>6</sup> the burden of which is that the miners have no coal "because there's too much coal". Such analyses as these would seem to indicate that democracy and technological perfectibility are somewhat out of keeping with their present social setting in America.

This, according to writers like Sherwood Anderson and Erskine Caldwell, has been realized by the capitalists and conservatives who wish to maintain the economic and political status quo. In order to stem the dynamic sluice breaking against them, they resort to palliatives which are only further symptomatic of the paradoxical elements in our society: wage-cuts, unemployment; relief that maintains unemployment; sharecropping and the agricultural renting system; the open-shop policy in many factories; the speed-up; the disconnection of safety devices; trends toward war and fascism. In the face of all these factitious evasions another paradox looms up; the great god optimism. The American is said to swallow all this patent medicine and be ever hospitable to more quackery.

In general, there have been two philosophies erected to account for these American paradoxes. One sees the explanation in the decline of the middle class<sup>7</sup>, the other in the rise of a new middle class.<sup>8</sup> Both points of view run parallel in so far as the outcome of either phenomenon leads away from the present system. There are many ways out of the Paradox, visioned by various writers and economists (irrespective of reactionary measures), ranging from Olson's Liberalism to Communism. Between the two might be pigeon-holed Rorty's "revolutionary receivership"; Well's world-state; Lincoln Steffen's belief in the working of the "art-motive" in labor; the hope of change within the established system fostered by Upton Sinclair and his progeny; Alfred Bingham's prophecy of public ownership superintended by a new middle class; and the variants of Socialism from G. B. S. to Lewis Corey.

<sup>6</sup>From *Labor and Coal*, New York, International Publishers, 1931, 255 pages. Quoted in Albert Maltz: *Black Pit*, New York, G. P. Putman, 108 pages frontispiece.

<sup>7</sup>See Lewis Corey: *The Crisis of the Middle Class*, New York, Covici Friede, 1935, 379 pages.

<sup>8</sup>See Alfred M. Bingham: *Insurgent America, Revolt of the Middle Class*, New York, Harper, 1935, 253 pages.

Most of the more radical revolutionaries entertain a keen delight in our cumulative paradoxes for their promise of the increasing proximity of what Lenin called "the day of the victorious proletarian revolution". The methods of such anticipating radicals comprise to nourishment of proletarian class consciousness, organization of labor through trade unions, and strikes with concomitant attacks on strike-breakers and Vigilantes.

Among the writers whose proletarian consciousness developed during the last ten years, we shall observe therefore, in addition to an exposition of capitalistic paradoxes, an interest in the revolutionary measures sponsored by Leftist economists to exorcise the great American disease. The problem of the American propagandist for radical change is, however, less constructive than it is destructive. He must convince the reader that the old order is unjust; the time has not yet come for him to outline in detail the architecture of the new order. Secondly, he must concern himself with that particular class of American society which most Leftists consider the harbingers of the new era: the proletarians. We may therefore expect to find in the "orthodox" radical novelist the picture of present capitalistic society viewed by a proletarian protagonist. After he has observed the picture, and become cognizant of the evils disturbing it, then he may be confronted with the constructive suggestions of those who have dreamed a new world. It is the critic's task to discover whether these preoccupations have led to the creation of stereotypes of literature, and to determine whether, as was the case with opponents of anti-Semitism and proselytizers for a new Russia, the most effective propagandists are those who employ traditional literary devices.

## II

In what has been called proletarian literature, books by or about proletarians, there are several variants of a single formula, but I have preferred to group them as a single type of American propagandist literature, the picaresque novel: "picaresque", because it traces the wanderings of the hero from town to town, from one odd job to another, and "proletarian", because the peripatetic in every case belongs to the propertyless class. Within this type of writing, two variants in technique, determined by the authors'

point of view, may be discerned: (1) either there is the *leit-motif* of the gradual growth of proletarian class consciousness, in which case the propagandist method would be called "delayed revealed"; or, (2) there is no development of class consciousness, in which case the propagandist technique would be designated as "concealed".

In 1929 Agnes Smedley in her autobiographical novel, *Daughter of Earth*,<sup>1</sup> began the succession of picaresque proletarian works. She traced the experiences of an individual in odd jobs, fighting poverty, and gradually realizing that she belonged with her class, the proletariat, and that the only way out for that class was Socialism. This is the basic theme which became popular with American writers who believed there was a formula for propagandist alchemy.

Edward Dahlberg rehashed the formula in the following year when he sketched the odyssey of Lorry Lewis in *Bottom Dogs*. Lorry's ineffectual youth is sprinkled with diverse and short-lived positions as Western Union messenger, cattle drover, door-to-door solicitor, busboy, and sodasquirt. The Vagabondage of the twentieth-century proletarian picaro consists of "boing, sleeping in coal cars, riding . . . railroad bronchos, going to strange hotel rooms . . . walking the streets." Lorry's listlessness and ineffectuality remain, however, and unlike Agnes Smedley he is not redeemed by the salvation of union with the masses. The novel conceals the *leit-motif*; the itinerant develops no philosophy.

By a similar abstinence from articulating the necessity of revolt, the drab tale of Catherine Brody's *Nobody Starves* (1932)<sup>2</sup> becomes more drab, but at the same time more disturbing. The wayfarers this time are two workers who married before the depression and were later hit by unemployment, wage cuts, and reduction of the working week in the factories of Detroit and Micmac. Throughout the period of the Wall Street crash the journalistic headlines are cheerful. "They were as heart-warming as the predictions of the fortune tellers—so encouraging to hear that there was money in your cup or in your stars though there

<sup>1</sup>*Daughter of Earth*, (1929) by Agnes Smedley. New York, Coward-McCann.

<sup>2</sup>*Bottom Dogs*, (1930) by Edward Dahlberg, New York, Doubleday, Doran.

*Nobody Starves*, (1932) by Catherine Brody, New York, Longmans, Green.



might be none in your purse." Only once does Bill scent the basic ill: "They won't stick together, that's the trouble." On the whole, he and his companions wander about falteringly, ignorant of their status, not knowing where to go or how. Although Bill finally murders his wife in a blind attempt to annihilate the world, most of the workers in their search for a cure-all simply go to the movies.

Jack Conroy used this pattern for all it was worth in the following year when he wrote *The Disinherited*.<sup>1</sup> Larry Donovan, born in the Monkey Nest miners' camp, witnesses strikes in mines and railroads, works in a steel mill in rubber and auto factories, hustles beet pulp for the Lakes Milling Company, and gradually abandons his desire to rise to a white collar job, realizing that he belongs with his class, and that their struggle is his. "I no longer felt shame at being seen at such work as I would have done once, and I knew that the only way for me to rise to something approximating the grandiose ambitions of my youth would be to rise with my class, with the disinherited: the bricksetters, the flivver tramps, boomers, and outcasts pounding their ears in flophouses." Social consciousness comes to Lorry through a German factory hand and disciple of Karl Liebknecht, as well as through his own experiences of labor and poverty, of scabs and conveyor systems.

In 1935 Conroy paralleled this work when in *A World to Win*<sup>2</sup> he grooved into a similar design the career of an intellectual proletarian. Robert Hurley's youth among the clodhoppers of Green Valley is elaborated; his early and disregarded contact with Sol Abraham, the Communistic influence, is touched upon; and finally, after Hurley has undertaken various odd jobs and bucked up against unemployment, he is endowed by the author with a class-consciousness. We find the usual mid-book attitude when Robert encounters his first strike: "He did not intend to take any part in breaking up a strike, even though he did not intend to endanger his body or his comfort in helping to win it." It is a far cry from the expected shift when Robert attacks the policeman who pinched his brother and discovers that he too has a world to win. With his realization of the necessity of mass revolt, his thoughts become

<sup>1</sup>*The Disinherited*, by Jack Conroy. New York, Covici Friede, 1933.

<sup>2</sup>*A World to Win*, by Jack Conroy, New York, Covici Friede, 1933.

lyrical: "They sat enclosed warmly in the comradeship of sorrow and weariness and anger, fellows of the men and women—fighting, laboring, seeing—who cry out relentlessly and passionately at factory gates. . . . Their breath a whisper that will not die—the prelude to storm."

In the same year two other writers augmented the picaresque proletarian series: Edward Anderson with *Hungry Men*,<sup>\*</sup> and Tom Kromer with *Waiting for Nothing*.<sup>†</sup> Acel Stecker, one of the *Hungry Men*, is an itinerant in flop houses, park benches, and city wharves, who spends his days grubbing tailor-made cigarettes and hitches, marrying casually, and forever hoping like his antecedent, Mr. Micawber, that something will turn up. For although he listens to the Communist disquisitions of Boots, and although he is aware that "the police work for the rich" and that "one man can pay a crooner one thousand dollars for one night and another man can't let his child give a penny to the grind organ", nevertheless Acel's ambition is to become a capitalist in a democratic society. Though he perceives that in a land of plenty there is no reason for him to live as he does, he makes no effort to band with his fellows, but simply boards another freighter for another city. Finally, Acel is acquitted from a jail sentence following a street brawl, because he refused to play "the International" on the streets. At this point the reader suspects that Acel's capitalist ambitions may perhaps be realized. The concealment of propaganda in this book is unusually effective. Better than any blatant plea for Communism, this vision of a youth completely helpless in the society to which he was born, and completely unwilling to change that society, this vision propagandizes.

Kromer's *Waiting for Nothing* is another account of a man trying to get his "three hots and a flop", a man "on the fritz", running into hi-jackers, sitting around jungle fires, sleeping in missions, watching the gas hounds, living on "drags with their strings of cars", meeting prostitutes and stiffies who are trying as he is to get their "three hots and a flop". As in Anderson's book, the *leit-motif* is absent; the characters are too helpless to stick up a man even

<sup>\*</sup>*Hungry Men*, by Edward Anderson, (date?), New York, Doubleday, Doran, 1935.

<sup>†</sup>*Waiting for Nothing*, by Tom Kromer, (date?), New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1935.

when they have a "gat", but they are not quite so Micawber-like as Anderson's *Hungry Men*; they are beginning to growl—but under their breath.

In all these novels the reader can anticipate with a fair amount of accuracy the career of the protagonist. The itinerary of the proletarian is chartered on a stereotyped pattern. The variants are few. One character works more or less frequently than another; one character develops a class-consciousness; another remains helpless, unaware, ineffectual. Of those novels which contain the *leit-motif*, Conroy's *Disinherited* is probably the best work. Of those which conceal their propaganda by sustaining their characters in the same state of economic unawareness at the end as at the beginning of their careers, Edward Anderson's *Hungry Men* would probably rank first. Of the two varieties, that which leaves the *leit-motif* unexpressed seems more effective as propaganda because it disturbs the reader more keenly, prods him more sharply with the desire to rouse these men from their chains. Possibly the strongest artistic kinship between reader and character is that felt for Conroy's Larry Donovan. But after reading a succession of novels of this type, the reader cannot but feel that the stories are twice-told tales, narrated almost as well by one writer as another. The authors themselves seem aware that they are following a formula; hence the reader senses that their rehashing of that formula is a blind alley in propagandist literature, and looks for a more valid fictional reaction to the anticipated revolution.

### III

In all the novels we have discussed, the attempt of the authors, whether expressed or tacitly suggested, has been the burgeoning of the workers' class consciousness. In those which are now to be noticed, there is a shift in purpose toward actual labor agitation with emphasis on the basic principles of organization and sabotage. These novels are the fictional counterparts of such works as Erskine Caldwell's *Some American People*,<sup>\*</sup> Sherwood Anderson's

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<sup>\*</sup>*Some American People*, by Erskine Caldwell, New York, R. M. McBride, 1935.

*Puzzled America*,<sup>9</sup> and James Rorty's *Where Life Is Better*.<sup>10</sup> From the viewpoint of a worker whose class consciousness has already ripened, or is at the point of maturation, the authors investigate conditions in mills and factories before, after, or during some phase of labor agitation.

Mary Heaton Vorse, choosing a limited field of inquiry, employing the device of repetition, reports in *Strike!* (1930)<sup>11</sup> the working conditions in the Basil-Schenk Manufacturing Company at Stonerton, Virginia. Recurrent scenes are given in which pickets, scabs, State Troops, and relief committees parade at cross purposes during the factory strike. We hear, in recurrent speeches, the diverse viewpoints of the Northern leader, the labor reporter, the hostile bourgeois, the mill hands. The stretch-out is followed by attempts at fraternization which in turn are succeeded by evictions, an attempted lynching, and finally a general slaughter of the laborites. Miss Vorse, without eliminating superfluities, all too adequately fulfills her promise to

tell . . . how first they overwork them and underpay them. They underpay them so much that mothers of families have to overwork. They abuse them and mistreat them when they try to organize. Finally they evict them. It's the cycle one has to enlarge upon.

And enlarge upon it she does, leaving no element unmentioned in the rebellion against pellagra and tuberculosis, against "the stretch-out", the day of twelve hours and twenty minutes, and an average weekly wage of twelve dollars.

Despite the fact that the author limits her scope to a single factory, within that scope she makes no attempt to sift her material for large kernels of interest; in her desire to tell everything she fails because of her wealth of unselected material.

By a carefully planned delay of her introduction of a strike, Grace Lumpkin two years later not only achieved greater artistic effectiveness than Mary Heaton Vorse, but wrote a novel which marks the high water mark of the literature of labor agitation. In *To Make My Bread* (1932)<sup>12</sup> the McClure family is first presented

<sup>9</sup>*Puzzled America*, by Sherwood Anderson, New York, C. Scribner, 1935.

<sup>10</sup>*Where Life Is Better*, James Rorty, New York, Reynal and Hitchcock, 1936.

<sup>11</sup>*Strike!*, by Mary Heaton Vorse, New York, H. Liveright, 1930.

<sup>12</sup>*To Make My Bread*, by Grace Lumpkin, New York, Macaulay, 1932.



to us in their native setting in Siler's Cove. The characters are well-rounded, three-dimensional figures. We see them searching for food, smacking their lips over a confab in the general store, being born, dying. Thus, when they migrate to a factory town, we are stricken far more by their struggle against disease, poverty, and overwork than if we had never met them before. The fact that Emma, whom we knew in Siler's Cove, is mowed down by pellagra is more moving than reports of multiple pellagra cases in *Strike!* Finally, through the influence of John Stevens, the singing laborer, Bonnie awakes to the realization of the evil of the factory. She is able to calculate that the cloth she makes "for fifty cents is sold for six dollars". Ora concludes, without preliminary readings in Thoreau, that she doesn't "run the machines any more . . . They run me". John Stevens brings them the cue to rebellion. "We must work in a strike, but there is something else. We must go beyond the strike to the message . . . that we must join with all others like us and take what is ours." And Bonnie takes up the cue, and dies proclaiming it. *Let Freedom Ring*,<sup>1</sup> the play based on the novel, condenses and centralizes the action by certain modifications; the result is more compact propaganda, but less literary satisfaction. For the novel, although it eliminates non-essentials, gives us this family in full detail confronting a society against which the reader is led, in union with the McClures, to revolt.

In 1934 Robert Cantwell wrote a book which was acclaimed by some as the finest example of proletarian literature on record. Nevertheless, *The Land of Plenty*<sup>2</sup> must remain a book in which Trick is the most unforgettable element. The Past Bay Manufacturing Company is placed on exhibition for the reader during the few moments in which the power behind the lights fails. During this time we witness the ineffectual circles in the air made by the sawdust taskmasters, Belcher and his overlord, Macmahon. The workers are represented by Hagen, the efficient, responsible laborer who has aged at his post. The book is a preface to strike. It compliments such studies as Albert Maltz's *Black Pit*<sup>3</sup> and

<sup>1</sup>*Let Freedom Ring*, by Albert Bein. New York, S. French, 1936, 170 pages.

<sup>2</sup>*The Land of Plenty*, (1934), by Robert Cantwell, New York, Farrar and Rinehart.

<sup>3</sup>*Black Pit*, by Albert Maltz, New York, G. P. Putnam, 1935.



Mary Heaton Vorse's *Strike!*, for it is less preoccupied with the material discomforts of the workers, though these are neglected, than with the insidious influence of Carl Belcher, the "efficiency expert", who knows as little about men as about the actual working of the plant. His task he accomplishes with thoroughness: the discharging of men and the reduction of salaries.

He was wrecking something that had been built up out of years of practice and labor, and even though they [the workers] were not conscious of it they sensed what he was doing and they were horrified and outraged as they would have been at any wanton destruction. . . .

The reader, along with the workers, is brought to the conviction that the presence of Belcher, with all of its pernicious implications, makes a strike ineluctable. Like most strike literature in America, the book is only indirectly Communistic. The strikers are accused of being Communists—which they are not. *The Land of Plenty* is a clever piece of writing; but the reader seldom finds any depths below its strategy.

In the same year, 1934, two novels appeared attacking the problems of labor agitation from different directions. In *The Foundry*<sup>1</sup> Albert Halper gives a clear analysis of the conflicts between closed and open shop, and between craft and industrial unionism. The former contrast is externalized by having closed shop in the Fort Dearborn Electrotpe Foundry, and open shop in Bowman House, lodged in the same building, from which the foundry receives its orders. The advantages of a Union network are evidenced on several occasions. Slavony, the tank-man, discharged ostensibly for eating a sandwich before lunch, actually for drawing a vulgar picture of boss Steuber, is returned to work through the quiet sabotage of his fellows in the Union. Again the power of closed shop is apparent when "the Big Smasher", Steuber's time-saving machine, intended to "shave three finishers off the payroll" is itself smashed. The non-union men are more easily disposed of than Slavony. Waldo, the errand boy, who liked to eat lunch during his lunchtime, and Hooper-Dooper, the janitor who felt "too young in the afternoon", are removed from the payroll without opposition. The contrast between craft and indus-

<sup>1</sup>*The Foundry* (1934), by Albert Halper, New York, Viking.

trial unionism is clearly expounded by Karl Heitman, the "shop radical", who disparages the smug content of those entrenched in their little craft union, and bids them

wake up to the fact that the labor movement is something bigger than our own little local; . . . it takes in everybody, yes, even the workers down in the plant below . . . there are no scabs, only unorganised workers . . . .

The author intelligently handles the transition period between the first and second steps in organized labor, and analyses with insight the defeated, frustrate lives of the three bosses. He escapes the error of endowing every capitalist with beefy hands and trembling jowls. The book rings true. Its expositions are clear; its propaganda honest; and the canvas of life in a foundry is artistically complete.

In William Rollins's *The Shadow Before*" we return to the strike proper, beginning from the inside of the Baumann-Jones Mill, and working our way out to the picket lines along the mental currents of the laborers. A ten percent wage cut precipitates a strike which the reader suspects is directed not only toward a salary raise but toward a revolution in the system which sponsored the cut. The workers who had lived their spare moments in pool rooms or movies become conscientious picketers, and find "the substitute for the old Brotherhood of Man: *class consciousness!*" The book is on the whole a mild dose of William Faulkner in Dos Passos form. Various sexual perversions are interpolated between the passages about the strike. However, the two are seldom amalgamated despite the fact that the same characters participate in both activities. Thus, though Rollins avoids the monotony of *Strike!* his episodic technique is not managed cleverly enough to attain that welding of many themes to be found, for example, in the works of Fielding Burke.

James Steele's *The Conveyor*, (1935),<sup>10</sup> is the fictional complement to Caldwell's *Some American People* in so far as it exposes working conditions in the Rivers auto plant. The novel is a kaleidoscope in which speed-up, accidents, labor-eliminating machinery, discarded safety devices whirl about in a bubble to be burst

<sup>10</sup>*The Shadow Before*, by William Rollins, New York, R. M. McBride, 1934.

<sup>11</sup>*The Conveyor*, (1935), by James Steele, New York, International Publishers.

only by labor agitation and organization. Like his picaresque proletarian fellows, Jim is one hundred-percent American until he is forced to perceive that when the Rivers Motor Company advertises a high wage policy, it concomitantly lays off thousands of workers, and reduces the working-week of those who remain. "I guess ol' Si Rivers didn't lose no money when he put up wages. He's got ev'rybody doin' almost two men's work now. Quite a savin', ain't it?" And finally, Jim is prepared to participate in Bill's agitation for union.

Six years after Vorse's book, John Steinbeck paralleled her work with his treatment of a strike among fruit croppers in *In Dubious Battle* (1936).<sup>1</sup> The point of difference is that here the perspective is candidly Communistic. Two members of the party organize a strike in Torgas Valley for higher wages, and are defeated by organized Vigilantism and strike-breaking activities which include the shooting of three strikers and the shutting off of the food supply. Leninist doctrine is applied consistently. It is stated that the mob is "stronger than all the men put together"; it is proclaimed though the strike itself ends in failure, a thousand men will have "learned how to strike", and will be ready to pool their knowledge in the days of the revolution. The compulsion which the Communists are under to employ any material that comes to hand to rouse the rebellion of the workers is reiterated in numerous episodes. Vetoed votes, burned barns, dead bodies are used as kindlewood to raise the flame. Nevertheless, the reader never actually sees a transition between Jim as an apprentice-Communist, and Jim as the competent, mature, clear-headed leader; never actually feels the mob working as a knit force. We are not sufficiently conscious of the men *en masse* to be roused to joy in their strike, to confess that though the battle is dubious, we are ready ourselves to go forth with the sword.

In the field of labor agitation certain novels rise above the recipe for strike literature, and move the reader to a disturbing sense of the necessity of revolt. This is accomplished most successfully by Grace Lumpkin in *To Make My Bread*. In the more limited realm of problems of organization Albert Halper has produced the most adequate work. The remaining novels are so caught up

<sup>1</sup>*In Dubious Battle*, by John Steinbeck, New York, Covici Friede.

with tricks to amaze the reader, as *The Land of Plenty*, or so involved in the mass of detail about working conditions or the machinery of a strike, as the writings of Vorse and Steele, that they never project the reader within the rebellious consciousness of the laborer. We search then for another form of proletarian literature, not quite so limited in scope as that concerned with strikes and unionism, which may perhaps give greater opportunity to the writer to draw creative richness from the revolution.

#### IV.

In place of following the formula adhered to by writers of picturesque proletarian novels, or of emulating those authors who stripped the problems of American propaganda to accounts of labor agitation, some writers chose the structure of the novel inherited through bourgeois tradition in which to house their equally radical, but less limited propaganda. Such a technique began rather self-consciously when Kenneth Burke inserted in a novel stylistically resembling the work of Virginia Woolf, some trenchant, disillusioned remarks about the dictatorship of the proletariat. *Towards a Better Life* (1932)<sup>20</sup> is a strange and beautiful piece of writing in which those emotions reserved by many writers for parenthetical statement are expanded and embroidered in verbal *petit-point*. But the novel also contains such statements as these: "The man did good for the oppressed? Then he made them oppressors", or "Oh, there is a revolutionary unction. There are the blasts of the well fed . . . comfortably summoning the people to rebel . . . They are the bankers' conscience . . . and can be kept about the house like castrated lion whelps", or "If enough men could be brought to realize their plight, then we could at their instigation have a reshuffling". No proletarian philosophy has been developed. But the author has begun to realize that the novelistic form used by Virginia Woolf to entrap the delicacies of feathers and saucepans and china, may also serve as a vehicle for conveying scattered musings on the proletariat.

In the same year Fielding Burke in *Call Home the Heart*<sup>21</sup> used

<sup>20</sup>*Towards a Better Life*, (1932). by Kenneth Burke, New York, Harcourt Brace.

<sup>21</sup>*Call Home the Heart*, Fielding Burke, New York, Longmans Green, 1932.



the novel form inherited from the nineteenth century, not merely as a dumping ground for fleeting radical cogitations, but as a broad pedestal on which to base her deeply-lodged Communistic convictions. Thus, instead of verbal insertions, we find Communism completely integrated in the life of a full-blooded character. As inevitably as her love for Britt, her bearing of children, her search for a broader life among the people of the town, does Communism enter the consciousness of Ishma. Through her contact with Derry Unthank and her experience in the mill, Ishma comes to understand the words of Dan Ogler that "no matter how glittering the front that capitalism may flaunt, at the end of its proud parade it wags the tail of a breadline". Ishma's personality is enriched by her life as a North Carolina mill worker, and she is ready to propagandize for internationalism in organized labor. "If we are pushed to the wall in spite of our union, it isn't because the union is wrong but because it isn't big enough. It's because it doesn't cover the earth. We'll do what we can to make it big enough, instead of punching holes in it." Like all of her other natural activities, Ishma's belief in the union and her devotion to Communism are not transitory interests but deeply seated forces that possess her and become more and more potent in her stride through life. Fielding Burke gives us a novel that amalgamates the emotional richness of a strong, mature woman of the hills with a profound belief in Communism. Both are inextricably welded within the frame of the traditional novel.

1932 saw the beginning of another successful effort to incorporate propaganda in the accepted novel form. James T. Farrell's Studs Lonigan, as far as his patriotism goes, is generally related to Dahlberg's Lorry Lewis, Catherine Brody's Bill, and Edward Anderson's Acel Stecker. Despite his impotence and ineffectuality, of which he is upon isolated occasions aware, Studs is congenitally blind to the social forces that inundate him. James Farrell gives his character an opportunity to speak with a radical. Let us listen to the dialogue:

Studs: But Bolshevism means revolution.

The red: How else are we going to win the means of production for ourselves?

Studs: But that's anarchy.



The red: What is it when guys like me all over the country carry the banner, sleep in Hoovervilles? What is it when they shoot down coal miners?

Studs: I'm not a Bolshevik. It's against the country and the church.

Farrell throws the spotlight on Studs when he attempts a bit of thinking after witnessing the parade of workers:

Why did these Jews and foreigners and Reds want to go on disrupting the way they did? . . . Children shouldn't be let parade with all this riff-raff, taught socialism and anarchy and atheism and ideas against God and America and the home in their tender years. . . . These youngsters should be taken away from their parents by law and placed in institutions so that they would not be contaminated with all their vile Bolshevism. . . . Lonigan thought he had a bigger squawk than these people, because he was losing more. And still he wasn't a Red, was he?

Studs in the net result of his parent's advice to curse "those god-damn Jew international bankers", of his parochial school training, of the movies and can houses in which his ego can distend itself. The propagandist method is "concealed"; that is, the author never attempts to reform overtly; and the propaganda itself is subordinated to traditional devices of depicting character. Farrell details minutely, step by step, the personality of Studs, bewildered runaway, ineffectual pugilist, avid movie-goer, unquestioning Catholic, one hundred-percent American, who has nothing to lose but many corroded chains, and who will not unite with the other Lonigans of America. He is thrown living in large proportions of flesh and blood before the reader; and the reader becomes aware of the social causes of Lonigan's impotent brutality and final defeat, and of their subtly implied remedy. Although Farrell uses the modern device of the scenario script in certain episodes, in the main his technique does not depart from that of nineteenth century trilogies. His novels are constructed around a character by architectonics similar to those of *Tom Jones*. The prodigality of detail, however, includes a tacit warning of malignant social forces in America, the outcome of which are blindness, destruction, death.

In 1933 Josephine Herbst returned partially to the method of

Kenneth Burke. *In Pity is Not Enough*,<sup>22</sup> a novel in the formal bourgeois tradition, the author sporadically warns her protagonist that the "barbaric form of social organization with its legalized plunder and murder, is doomed to die and make room for freer society." Trexler's meditations about social idealism constitute merely an irrelevant motif in the life of this fugitive from the courts of the South after the Civil War. The fact that Miss Herbst uses a social outcast about whom to weave her novel is an important indication of the trend toward introducing revolutionary characters and concepts in the established bourgeois form. James T. Hanley in *Stoker Bush* (1936)<sup>23</sup> used a similar method of telling a tale of love, desertion and jealousy, by adopting a proletarian as his protagonist. The suggestion in the latter work is that the proletarian can stand on his own as a character in a traditional story; that he has gone beyond the need of propaganda and can take his place in literature as the prime mover of a story that might equally concern an aristocrat or a capitalist.

Waldo Frank in 1934 searched further back in the bourgeois tradition than the nineteenth century to find a form for his propagandist message. *The Death and Birth of David Markand*<sup>24</sup> is actually a twentieth-century version of the medieval Quest story. In place of the Holy Grail, there is class consciousness: union with man instead of union with Christ. The devices are also medieval in their symbolism. Markand abandons his wife and children, his work in the dead body of the United Tobacco Industries, and his dead money reaped from the bondage of peons, for a strange quest. He lives in the fields and meets Deborah Gore, and the worker, Stan; like the picaresque proletarian, he alternates varied forms of labor with periodic loafing. As newspaper devil, barkeep, and politician, he comes to know workers on their own level. He fails sometimes, and spreads pain. It is through him indirectly that Stan is killed. At last David discovers John Byrne, the radical, and learns the alternatives before him:

<sup>22</sup>*Pity is not Enough*. (1932), by Josephine Herbst, New York, Harcourt Brace.

<sup>23</sup>*Stoker Bush*, (1936), by James T. Hanley, London, Chatto and Windus.

<sup>24</sup>*The Death and Birth of David Markand*, (1934), by Waldo Frank, New York, C. Scribner.

You've got your choice between socialist or Christian, and if you have any guts you'll *be* one or the other. If you recognize your unity with all men. . . . then you'll be a socialist. If you stand aside, denying man . . . then you'll invent God and be a Christian . . . . If you lack the guts . . . to choose, you'll shilly-shally between the two and be a bourgeois liberal.

But Byrne dies, and also David's son, both through a vague, symbolic inadequacy in David. Slowly, in and out of many blind alleys, he wanders, questing; gradually, through his work in the shambles, in barrooms, in the Batesville Steel Mill, class consciousness comes to him, and with it a new birth.

I embrace your class. All men who want to live today must embrace it. My own life needs it to live. I have only the dead body of a class that dies: I need, that I may live, the living body of the class which is now life.

*The Death and Birth* has been condemned by Marxist critics for its flights into vague idealism. At the basis of such criticism there seems to lie a preconceived notion that a proletarian novel must not borrow from bourgeois tradition, and surely must not adopt medieval Christian devices. In the light of what Frank has achieved, such a condemnation appears to the present writer to be simply the "reductio and absurdum" of pursuing Marxist criticism to its logical end. For Frank goes beneath all superficialities and leaves us with the granite essentials of a man who wanders through a penumbra into light. The book is more than propaganda, for it touches the philosophy, and below the philosophy, the caverns of a human being between two worlds in travail, bringing life to the new. It couches the timely in terms of the universal. David Markand might be called an Everyman finding himself in this, our century.

It is an anticlimax to discuss after such a work, a novel which also appeared in 1934, Arnold B. Armstrong's *Parched Earth*.<sup>22</sup> By symbolistic devices, within the traditional novel form, the author flays the insidious tzar of a small town in Tontos Valley, California. Everett Caldwell has a malignant effect not only upon the workers whom he discharges by the installation of machinery,

<sup>22</sup>*Parched Earth*, (1934), Arnold B. Armstrong. New York, Macmillan.

but also, symbolically, upon the town prostitute who bears him an idiot son. The character of Caldwell is condemned as much because of his baleful economic influence as because of his desire to hush up the paternity of the town idiot. He is the rugged individualist who tramples upon the fruit cutters of Slob Row, sets the price for canned fruit, and considers labor cheap, "capital god-like in its prerogatives". Hop Collins understands the evil when he declaims,

Who in hell gives a damn about the workin'-man these days  
'cept the Communists? The A. F. L. sure don't. The Wob-  
blies is gone. The Socialists ain't been for the laborin' man  
since Deb's time . . . .

Feebly and hesitantly the down-trodden join with Dave Washburn, the proletarian leader, who is injured by the idiot Wally, symbol of Caldwell's deleterious power. The fact that Wally also dynamites the dam and floods the town may be interpreted as the symbolical overthrow of Caldwell and his entourage; for Hop, and Hatty who believes in him, are saved in the flood. Unless so construed, the general disaster at the end of the novel is merely a sensational collapse of all the cards in the deck, reminiscent of the close of *Tom Thumb the Great*. A symbolical interpretation indicates that Caldwell is engulfed by his own economic malice. Marxist prognostications are neatly tied up in the strings of symbolism.

Fielding Burke proved once again in 1935 that she knows better than most writers on proletarian themes how to incorporate economic issues in the normal lives of human beings. This was apparent in *Call Home the Heart* and it is equally so in the sequel, *A Stone Came Rolling*.<sup>2</sup> In addition to her power of amalgamating diverse strands, the author makes those individuals who are devoted to the Communist cause so appealing, so strong and kind that the reader, though he be a died-in-the-wool conservative, is tricked into sympathy with their cause. Ishma has such a firm and well-controlled vision, that in caring for her, a reader must see nobility in the purpose to which she is devoted. Ishma has gone no further in her development as a Communist than in the prelimi-

<sup>2</sup>*A Stone Came Rolling*, Fielding Burke, New York Longmans Green, 1935.

nary novel. She still bewails division in labor and the struggle of workers against workers. She still upholds the belief that "all of the workers must take all of the mills at the same time". And *A Stone Came Rolling* goes no further than *Call Home the Heart*. Using the same device of incorporating radical issues in nineteenth-century fictional form, it simply repeats the message of *Call Home the Heart* in an equally forceful manner.

When Grace Lumpkin abandoned labor agitation proper and attempted to introduce Communism into a bourgeois novel form, she did not sustain her craftsmanship. *A Sign for Cain* (1935)<sup>27</sup> is inferior to *To Make My Bread* mainly because the author lacks Fielding Burke's power to unite diverse elements. Having introduced her original theme of poverty among the Southern negroes, an issue in which the building of "a new world" where "people will have plenty because there is enough for everyone" is quite congruent, the author runs off on a tangent, abandons the collective needs of whites and blacks, and pursues a problem that is purely racial. Denis, the negro, and Bill Duncan, the white editor, unite in their Communist agitations. But with the murder of Evelyn Gardner by her dissolute nephew Jim, the story is shunted off to the consideration of a strictly negro issue. The blacks, Denis and Fincents, are arrested for rape and murder, and are slain by Jim. Thus we have simply another variation on the Scottsboro case, and inter-racial Communism is relegated to mid-air. In addition to this failing, the dialogue of the Southern aristocrats is halting and melodramatic; Miss Lumpkin is more sure of herself among the workers. Hence, no doubt, her success in managing problems of labor agitation and her failure in attempting a novel in the bourgeois tradition.

In the same year Bruno Traven published *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* (1935)<sup>28</sup>, a book that employs all the alluring devices of adventure stories and pulp magazines to prove that there is a curse on gold, a capitalistic curse. Only on rare occasions does Traven interrupt his exciting tale of a hunt for gold, reminiscent in its adventure of the works of London, Conrad, et al., to

<sup>27</sup>*A Sign for Cain*, (1935), Grace Lumpkin, New York: Lee Furman.

<sup>28</sup>*The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, (1935), by Bruno Traven. New York: A. A. Knopf.



remind the reader that though the story is a thriller it is also an imprecation on American society. Three shiftless men band together to search for an abandoned gold mine. They work the field and hoard the nuggets.

Those who up to this time had been considered by them as their proletarian brethren were now enemies against whom they had to protect themselves. As long as they had owned nothing of value, they had been slaves of their hungry bellies . . . . All this was changed now . . . . They had reached the first step by which man becomes the slave of his property.

After many adventures Dobbs begins to feel the curse. After slaying Curtin for his share of the gold, he, the erstwhile outcast, now "longed for civilization, for law, for justice, which would protect his property and his person with a police force . . . ." The book is the perfect "tribute" to capitalistic civilization, for in its terrifying accusation it demonstrates that even those who are in it and of it and glorify it, are tricked by it into death and failure.

Sinclair Lewis thumbed his literary nose at American society by viewing it, not as the previous writers have done, in its present form, but as it might become. Although the liberal viewpoint is sustained throughout *It Can't Happen Here* (1935)<sup>1</sup> the author often accuses the Fascists from within the Fascist camp. This trick of allowing the opposition to flaunt its own iniquity instead of openly attacking it from the other side of the fence has a powerful effect, and appears in parallel works in England (*In the Second Year*)<sup>2</sup> and Italy (*Fontemara*).<sup>3</sup> Outside of this device, *It Can't Happen Here* differs from none of Lewis's other works which are all in the formal literary tradition. This strong polemic against American Fascism, with details borrowed from readings in Tchernavin, Billinger, Lorant, etc., loses its effectiveness because of the undecided attitude of Doremus Jessup, the raconteur. The reader, along with Jessup, hates the Corpo Fascistic state as much as Lewis, but neither Lewis nor Jessup nor the reader knows precisely what kind of state should be substituted for Capitalism,

<sup>1</sup>*It Can't Happen Here*, (1935), by Sinclair Lewis. New York, Doubleday, Doran.

<sup>2</sup>*In the Second Year*, by Storm Jameson, New York, Macmillan, 1936.

<sup>3</sup>*Fontemara*, by Ignazio Silone, translated by Michael Wharf, New York. H. Smith and R. Haas, 1934.

Fascism, or Communism. All three forms of government are indicted. The Russian experiment is called by Doremus, "an imagination-hating, pharisaic materialism". Capitalism and Fascism are equally antipathetic to the liberal who claims that "the worst Fascists were they who disowned the word 'Fascism' and preached enslavement to Capitalism under the style of Constitutional and Traditional Native American Liberty". Jessup is a liberal who would neither go forward to a revolutionary state, nor backward to reactionary dictatorship, nor would yet stand still. This is the type of propaganda that is unsatisfying simply because it is so very provocative. The reader's question, "What then?" must perforce remain rhetorical.

Reviewing the writings that indict American society, or analyse the class struggle, or propound revolutionary dogma within the confines of the inherited literary form, we must conclude that thus far these novels win the laurels for artistic and propagandist effectiveness. The works of Fielding Burke, Waldo Frank, James T. Farrell, and Bruno Traven bear evidence that the concept of the revolution gave a wealth of opportunity to the writer who was not completely dislodged from his literary moorings. In their own field, *To Make My Bread* and *The Foundry* are certainly as effective as many of the novels we have discussed. But one cannot help feeling that the writers who have adapted the bourgeois tradition to their immediate needs have succeeded not only in writing a convincing indictment of American society within a definite period, but also in bestowing upon their imprecations a universality and timelessness impossible within the narrower confines of the literature of labor agitation. Certainly none of the picaresque proletarian novels is comparable in artistic achievement or proselytizing power with the books we have just analyzed. Instead of following propagandist formulas, or of limiting themselves to labor agitation, Frank, Burke, Traven, and Farrell applied their literary inheritance to their observations of American society. They welded the present with the past and, finding them miscible, created novels that are now, and one feels will remain valid whenever men join against forces that oppress and annihilate.

## VII.

We may not conclude, however, that a union of the bourgeois tradition with revolutionary doctrine resulted in the most effective treatment of the latter, until we have determined whether any new form has been devised for propagandist themes. Is there any writer who has discarded traditional devices of picaresque romance, medieval symbolism, or the nineteenth-century architectonics of developing character "by an infinite number of infinitesimal changes", and who, dislodged from his moorings, has created a new method of literary construction for proletarian issues.

In 1925 John Dos Passos worked his belief that there is "no hope for the workers but in Revolution" in an episodic, staccato, frugal arrangement of incidents fitting the clicking, metallic tempo of New York—its dirt, drabness, lights, shadows, and grimy corners. Like the "doublefaced word" that "clinked like a coin" in Jimmy Herf's brain and bore the twentieth-century heraldry: Success Failure, Success Failure, so the shifting of episodes in *Manhattan Transfer*<sup>2</sup> turns the spotlight from one character to another, from Emile, the revolutionary cook, to Congo, the self-made man, to Joe Harland who once "owned half the Street" till the coin stopped spinning and clinked down on the wrong side. In *Manhattan Transfer* this digressive arrangement of incident with devices borrowed from musical composition, though not original per se, was applied for the first time to proletarian themes. Five years later Dos Passos demonstrated a more complete inventiveness when he intercalated camera and news reels in *The 42nd Parallel*. These interpolations, according to Granville Hicks, were contrived to exhibit the external social forces influencing the lives of the characters. Thus we find inter-narrative prose-poems on Eugene Debs; Minor C. Keith, railroad builder; Andrew Carnegie who "whenever he made a billion dollars . . . endowed an institution to promote universal peace always except in times of war"; Bob La Follette, "a willful man expressing no opinion but his own." The narrative portion itself employs the episodic technique of *Manhattan Transfer*. One melody is abandoned for another until at the end they are harmonised. The desultory Com-

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<sup>2</sup>*Manhattan Transfer*, by John Dos Passos. New York, Harper, 1925.

munistic leanings of Mac, interrupted by marriage, work, and travel, are silenced while Dos Passos expounds the jingoistic, almost slap-stick Communism of Jerry Burnham, and that in turn is hushed when the author introduces the voice of Ward Moorehouse, the young man who rose by his own bootstraps. Finally the characters intermingle; the voices chant in unison. Dos Passos's devices, contrived, as Granville Hicks believes, to show "the fundamental unity beneath the seemingly chaotic complexity of American life,"<sup>28</sup> are certainly of great literary importance insofar as they indicate the possibility of a new form for the proletarian novel. To some slight extent Rollins in *The Shadow Before* has picked up some of Dos Passos's tricks, and the interpolation of camera reels has been adopted by James T. Farrell. As isolated novels, however, the works of Dos Passos are as yet only very promising experiments. In spite of Granville Hicks's praise, *The 42nd Parallel*<sup>29</sup> never attains the unity beneath chaos reached by Waldo Frank, Fielding Burke, or Grace Lumpkin. The staccato design demonstrates chaos well enough, but the news and camera reels are never amalgamated with the actual narrative portions save in the reader's imagination. Dos Passos, though he has not so far achieved greatness himself, points the way in which greatness may be achieved. His gleanings from musical, cinematographic, and journalistic contrivances, while they remain in the novels of Dos Passos the tricks of a patent inventiveness, may some day be coalesced with character in the greatest of all proletarian novels. This Picasso of literature may some day perhaps be the "source of greatness in others".

### VIII.

Leftist literature has reached such quantitative and qualitative proportions that the critic, having accepted them as evidence of a firmly entrenched contemporary trend, must consider certain questions relevant to the aesthetics of propaganda. Of these perhaps the least important is, "What has proletarian literature done

<sup>28</sup>Granville Hicks: *The Great Tradition, an interpretation of American literature since the civil war*, New York. Macmillan, 1933, 317 pages. See page 290.

<sup>29</sup>*The 42nd Parallel*, by John Dos Passos, New York, Harper, 1930.



for the revolution?" To gauge the influence of the written word upon any social event has always been a delicate and elusive task, a little simpler to deduce after the reformation than before. Thus, one recalls William Langland and the Peasant Rising, Milton and the Civil War, Voltaire and Rousseau paving the way for the French Revolution, Dickens clearing the ground for revisions in the penal code. But determining precisely the manner or degree whereby these writers brought about social changes has remained a disputable problem. Basing our suggestions on the belief that publishers issue books to sell, we might conclude that today there is a growing demand for socially-conscious literature. A new class of readers, alive to the social forces about them, is sniffing the print. It is not inconceivable that a reader today might turn from Lumpkin to Marx, from Sholokhov to Lenin. To some extent also, the Red Terror has become less of a bugbear through these literary antitoxins.


It is, however, more important, and until the passage of years has broadened our historical perspective, more fruitful, to ask ourselves what the revolution has done for the American writer. First of all, it has offered him a new local color, the setting of mines, mills, and flophouses. Secondly, it has given him a new character, the proletarian, whose appearances run the gamut from oppressed factory worker to protagonist in a universal love story, as in Hanley's *Stoker Bush*. Negatively, it has freed the writer from the escapist attitude which dictated the formal preoccupations of imagism, dadaism, and all the other sterile isms of literary play boys. Most important of all, the revolution has made the writer aware of the necessity of integrating social background with the tale that is told. A good many writers have, by their preoccupations with the revolution, developed not merely an attitude but a social philosophy leading more or less to Karl Marx. Finally, in the case of Dos Passos, this new social engrossment has led to experiments in a new proletarian formal structure for the American novel.

The critic's final query must be, "How well has the writer worked this mine; how successfully has he transformed the potentialities into literary actualities?" Since this has been the main thread of our criticism, we have now simply to rephrase as conclusions the suggestions already implied. As with the works of



Feuchtwanger and L. C. N. Stone on anti-Semitism, and of Asch and Ossorgin on Russian Communism, so also the novels of Farrell, Lumpkin, and Frank in America indicate that the writings which link the new powers derived from anticipated social changes with the traditional resources of literature make for the most effective artistic and propagandist work. The employment of suggestive restraint when imposed on propaganda of any kind results in the use of the "concealed" or "delayed" revealed technique in which the revolutionary message is implicit or suggested only after a conciliatory groundwork has been laid. The use of selection gives to the writer the possibility of choosing those particular aspects of society which fit into the natural background of the character, instead of inundating him with a profusion of statistical detail. Finally, the integration of carefully selected minutia with the lives of human beings in his book, gives the writer the power of amalgamating his propagandist purpose with character development, and makes political interests, for example, take as expected a place as birth or food or love. Until new bottles have been blown, and that they will be has been indicated by the work of Dos Passos, the most effective writers will be those who pour the new wine of social consciousness into the old bottles of these inherited techniques. The past is still fertile when it copulates with the present.

by William Gruen



## MONTAIGNE: SCEPTIC OR APOLOGIST?

Everyone knows Montaigne, the sceptic. His genial and expansive essays have made their pedestrian way through several centuries, and if their critical force has waned to irrelevance, they are still justly prized for their literary charm and virile sincerity. When, however, we read this sceptic and iconoclast in the light of the political and social history of his age, certain aspects of his writing acquire special significance, in which—to say the least—scepticism comes in very questionable shape.

Medieval morals imposed an ideal of perfection on man that could be achieved only in the City of God. Man, born in sin, could hope for such achievement only through a life-long penance and a stern restraint of all his wayward, human impulses. This harsh dogmatic morality, even in the darkest centuries, was not without a luminous passion and a divine afflatus. Though it was no more than a ghostly promise of fairer things, it could elevate the soul to a refined ecstasy and lend it a poetic grace. Montaigne noted the evils of dogmatism, but he was equally opposed to the exuberance which great convictions can inspire. He could not disassociate this exaltation from the harshness and severity of medieval dogma and his destructive scepticism towards the latter became also an attack on the former. Tolerance towards human frailty came hand in hand with a distrust of all great passions and the pursuit of distant ideals. In pervading his morals with the human, earthly flavor of life, Montaigne needlessly reduced life to its most commonplace human dimensions.

In the third and maturest of his three books of essays, he writes: "The virtue of the soul does not consist in flying high, but in walking orderly; its grandeur does not exercise itself in grandeur, but in mediocrity." Order and peace are indeed among the highest desiderata of this sceptic. For him nothing is more important than a life of ease and retirement. And to such a life

Montaigne's scepticism comes as a happy and adventitious mentor. He impugnes the validity of human reason only to gain a comfortable release from the urgency of decisions, or rather from the need to act upon them. Certainly, his scepticism leads to a tolerance of creed and opinion, but this sceptical tolerance forsakes its critical function when Montaigne says that it is "very unjust to go about to subject public and established customs and institutions to the weakness and instability of a private and particular fancy". This remark, which so taken out of context, might pass for an attack on the monarchy under whose irresponsible government thousands of people were then being slaughtered, is used by Montaigne as an injunction against the criticism of the established order. For the "Christian religion has all the marks of the utmost utility and justice; but none more manifest than the severe injunction it lays indifferently upon all to yield absolute obedience to the civil magistrate, and to maintain and defend the laws." Montaigne wrote this at a time when the intrigues of Catherine de Medici and the Guise and Bourbon princes threw France into almost continual civil war, made political murder the order of the day, and caused the horrible massacre of St. Bartholomew. In order to understand Montaigne these aspects of his time are significant. They stimulate a quest for those dominant interests which made his peculiar scepticism possible; a scepticism which does not doubt the divine justice exemplified in the "public and established customs and institutions" of the bloodiest era in French history.

This astonishing union between scepticism and conformity is made possible by a happy divorce which Montaigne brings about between thought and action. By this separation we can indulge our private fancy without disturbing the public institutions, and should those institutions become tyrannical and oppressive we always retain the doubtful liberty of private thought. "Public society has nothing to do with our thoughts", writes Montaigne in one of his earlier essays, "but the rest, as our action, our labours, our fortunes and our lives, we are to lend and abandon them to its service and to the common opinion."

It would not be quite correct to say that this uncritical, dogmatic attitude towards social questions arises from the indifference

of the Humanists to politics. It is true that such indifference was characteristic of the Greek scholars and Latinists of Montaigne's time. But Montaigne was not of them. He was no scholar though his love of classical literature led him to a wide and desultory reading in that field. His work is more akin to that of Erasmus who though an editor of a number of texts was essentially a man of letters. But this similarity between Montaigne and Erasmus ceases with their common interest in bringing the literature of antiquity to bear on the culture of their own time. Beyond this similarity the rationalism of Erasmus and the scepticism of Montaigne offer an illuminating contrast in their impact on the social problems of their time. Erasmus believed that only through reason can we secure sound guidance in morals and politics. Montaigne is a sceptic from whose radical opposition to dogmatism one might expect some bold criticism of institutions which derive from tradition or authority. And yet Montaigne, the sceptic, is revealed in many respects as an innocuous conformist, while Erasmus, the rationalist, appears as an iconoclast. Nowhere in Montaigne can we find the critical boldness which is characteristic of Erasmus: "The people build cities, princes pull them down; the industry of citizens creates wealth for rapacious lords to plunder; plebeian magistrates pass good laws for kings to violate; the people love peace, and their rulers stir up war."

One cannot fail to note the corresponding difference between the stations these two men occupied in life. Erasmus, the bastard son of a man of very modest means, was a poor scholar, and after leaving the monastery lived on the pittance he earned by his teaching until he achieved fame. Montaigne, raised with all advantages wealth could secure, became seigneur of a large estate. It was as easy for the former to note the injustices of the social system which dealt with him so harshly in his youth, as for the latter to vindicate the established order which endowed him with such generous means.

In the life of ease which his wealth and political connections assured him, Montaigne found a happy consummation of his nature. A change in his conditions could bring no desired benefit, and might cause some dreaded loss. One can understand his writing that "For my own part, I have a great aversion from

novelty, what face or what pretence soever it may carry along with it".

Montaigne was at peace with himself, and his sceptical morality is simply a treaty of peace with the world. He demanded only his tranquillity and his possessions, and in return he offered free sway to the vagaries of all society. This liberal tolerance towards others bore, however, an implicit reservation: we are free but we must maintain order "for it is the rule of rules, the general law of laws that every one observe those of the place wherein he lives." This order must be maintained at all costs and under all circumstances, for "it argues a strange self-love and great presumption to be so fond of one's own opinions, that a public peace must be overthrown to establish them." When one remembers Montaigne's indifference to the cruelty and dishonesty of the ruling powers of sixteenth century France, and the extent of their injustice and treachery, one is compelled to suspect that it is not so much the public peace, as the quiet of Montaigne, that is so sedulously guarded by this pious sceptic.

From the vantage point of his scepticism he could have easily gained the vision of a social regimen in which a sound recourse to experience, and not tradition, form the pervasive principles of government. Then he might have given a consummate social expression to his kindly, ironic tolerance, and he would not have discounted those higher reaches of the human spirit which have marked every great achievement. But no such vision could turn the eyes of Montaigne from the safer and more solid virtues of his private life. No medieval dogmatist could have been a stauncher advocate of the status quo than this sceptic. Scepticism in him is not an instrument of liberation but an apology for conservatism. He holds above question all those dogmas which assure his worldly security, and applies his scepticism only to change and innovation and to any aspirations which might disturb the quiet, cultured routine of a lettered gentleman.



by Gilbert E. Govan

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## THE POWYS FAMILY

IN dedicating one of his earlier novels, "Rodmoor", to Emily Brontë, John Cowper Powys gave perhaps the best clue to the mental attitudes of his brothers and himself, for she, almost alone among other English novelists, has been possessed by the ecstatic madness that has also seized them. It is an ecstasy produced by the joy of living—by the beauty of life: such random and inconsequential things as a butterfly dancing across a field of snow in Switzerland, a line or a phrase in a book or poem, the expression on the face of a young girl in love, or an old man as he sits and contemplates some secret inner vision. Such things give pleasure but there is pain, as well—the pain caused by man's cruelties to his fellow beings, who include animals, insects, birds and plants—all growing things. The pain caused by the realization of "how intolerably alone we are", as Llewellyn says in *Skin for Skin* "each one of us, like cattle herded into a merciless stockyard, to be driven into the shambles, separately, when our turn comes." But if they feel pain at such things, they seldom condemn—again like Emily Brontë, who pictures Heathcliff more as the unfortunate consequence of causes outside his control, rather than as consciously depraved. In *Mr. Weston's Good Wine*, by Theodore Powys, Mr. Bunce, the landlord, asks Mr. Grobe, the rector of the village church, the direct question: "be'en wold Grunter or God almighty who do all the mischief in Folly Down?" And Mr. Grobe answers later by saying, "We must blame ourselves." Which hardly satisfied the puzzled tavern-keeper, who replied: "'Tis more likely we should blame each other." Which is exactly what the Powyses attempt to avoid.

Man, according to them, is caught in a trap neither of his own making nor of his own choosing, and none may condemn any other than himself, because each man must taste of life in his own way. And it is the only life that he will know—consequently let him live

every moment for itself—let him savor to its faintest drop every experience that life gives. In *The Cradle of God*, Llewellyn says, "the soul of life lies embedded in what is transitory. The very nature of beauty is ephemeral. To deny this is to deny the high destiny that is the ancient heritage of mortals. In a few flashing moments that are his, it is possible for a man to glimpse immortality, the only immortality that he will ever know, in the presentation of what is, in its essence, perishing. Life is a spectacle deep and sorrowful and very tender." And in this way do these three brothers attempt to picture life—man and his fellow-beings—natural and unadorned, unwholesome in some aspects, beautiful in others, but always natural—close kin to animals, as man is—deriving from his God, as he does. For the artist "must know what birth means, and that we come into the world in no very cleanly manner; he must know what love means, and wrath, and lust, and, above all, death."

## II.

There are many qualities which all the Powyses have in common, but none to a greater degree than the recognition that there is a great difference between men whose roots have been long embedded in the same soil and those who wander footless and landless over the world. Though they, themselves, have done their share of wandering it is always to England that their thoughts return and to that particular little section of England in which their early lives were spent. John Cowper has gone back—after long residence in this country—to wait for death in the same spot which has received his ancestors for generations.

They feel that man is principally interesting in the beliefs, the folkways, the traditional culture that he has developed. It is this which forms the basis of so much of their writing. In *Skin for Skin*, Llewellyn tells of meeting an old fellow named Denman: "This old laborer had been a quarryman in Ham Hill for nearly eighty years. He had seen us from a distance trailing along in white flannels through the Stoke Road dust. He accosted us. I began to think that the old man had already, early as it was, been drinking cider, for presently he laid his toil-encrusted hands upon us and cried out in a loud voice: 'Sixty years ago today come

two months I was trapesing along this here turnpike road to ploughing match. Yes, we know as much of life as they that cross the ocean, we that live in the deep soil. We have our waves as well as the rest of them, we quarrymen, ploughmen, shepherdmen, come fire, come rain, come cold, come heat.'” It is from the soil man derives his living—it is to the soil that he returns—and it is man close to his traditional soil that these writers have used as their material.

From Llewellyn's autobiographical writing, *Skin for Skin* and *Black Laughter*, do we get most of our information about the family and the relations of the various members of it with each other. John Cowper has written and published his autobiography, but—as one might expect—it is mystical and introspective, not about the tangible things of his life. One is but disappointed if he goes to it for anything about the family. He did collaborate with Llewellyn in *Confessions of Two Brothers*, but it was written largely because of Llewellyn. Llewellyn's continued illness has caused him to be the center of family interest; it is but natural that his writing should reflect this interest.

The intimate touches in *Skin for Skin* not only delight us but enlighten as well. I understand the books of both John and Llewellyn better for such bits of conversation as this, when, walking through a wood one day, John said, “I am afraid I have the same kind of sneaking desire for some sort of metaphysical theory as a background to life that others have for a definite religion.” Llewellyn's reply was, “Is not a vivid apprehension of life's brevity sufficient?”

Since 1909, Llewellyn Powys has had an almost constant struggle with tuberculosis. It is no wonder that he has “a vivid apprehension of life's brevity”—for he has lived with death as a close neighbor for so long. It colors his writing, not in any depressing sense for it but heightens his impressions. The knowledge that every experience is ephemeral—that each sensation should be tasted to the uttermost extent—makes his writing the more vivid. And if it had not been for his tubercular condition, we might not have had his delightful autobiographical writing.

Through the pages of *Skin for Skin* and *Black Laughter* stalk the long limbs and active minds of this rare and original

family. Littleton, famous cricket player, thoughtful and gentle, kneeling to put on his sister Marian's skates, or arranging for Llewellyn's stay at Davos Platz in Switzerland; Willie, the farmer; A. R., the architect, probably the best contemporary authority on old English churches; Phillippa, the only one of the girls to write, and the father and mother of this varied group, who today lie in Montacute graveyard, "sleeping an unawakening sleep, untroubled by thoughts of turbulent children"; all these are presented along with vignettes of the devoted three, John, Theodore, and the author of the book.

Notes about the family, John Cowper has told that, as children, he, his brothers, and sisters were allowed to run wild about the countryside. Their father, the Reverend Charles Francis Powys, was a great lover of nature and it is doubtless from him that the love of all things living, which is so evident in the work of all the writing members of the family, is derived. In *Skin for Skin*, we find many instances where this interest is shown; one of which I cannot avoid quoting, because of the quality of feeling displayed and its portrayal of family relationships. "When we had sat down, the old man, my father, rubbing his hands with delight at having his children around him, would ask us about our walk, and we would tell him that we had found the body of a dead heron down by Walham's mill, and also a flower which we thought might be a skullcap. And at that he would send my sister Lucy to fetch his Bewick and his John's *Botany* from his study. He would then read out extracts from the two volumes. And afterwards, with a look of boundless benevolence, he would rub his hands and say that he was glad that we boys had had an interesting walk. And at this my mother's face would become lit up with a smile, at once so radiant, so sweet and so ironic, that I would forgive her for being in love with the side of the moon which turns itself away from the earth . . . And she would lean over to John and stroke his hand; for she always loved him, her first born, the best."

### III.

It was as a lecturer that the eldest Powys first attracted attention. Inasmuch as literature, for him, is second in interest

only to life, itself, that was the subject of his lectures. I have never heard him lecture, and, as he is a very feeble man now, I shall probably never hear him. But I have read his books of critical essays, *Visions and Revisions*, and *Suspended Judgments*, which doubtless contain the material he used in his lectures, and I have seldom read more discerning criticism or such unusual prose. In an essay on de Maupassant in *Suspended Judgments*, he says: "It is a wonderful commentary, when one thinks of it, upon the malleability of human language that it can take shape and color from the pressure of a single temperament. The words in the dictionary are all there, all at the disposal of everyone of us—but how miraculous a thing to make their choice and their arrangement expressive of nothing in earth but the peculiar turn of one particular mind." And in another place, he says of William Blake: "One touches the fringe of the very mystery of human symbols—of the uttermost secret of words in their power to express the soul of a writer—when one attempt to analyse the childlike simplicity of William Blake's style. How is it that he manages with so small, so limited a vocabulary, to capture the very 'music of the spheres'? We all have the same words at our command; we all have the same rhymes; where then lies this strange power that can give the simplest syllables so original, so personal, a shape?" Again he uses that expressive word, so unusual in this connotation, malleable, when he continues: "We are brought to pause more sharply and startlingly in his case than that of almost any other, before the primordial mystery of human expression and its malleableness under the impact of personality."

Many times have I felt the same sense of wonder about writers—that they could so marvellously make words do their bidding—and John Cowper Powys has given me as many thrills of that kind as any that I know. When he asks, for example, in *Culture and Nature*, "What is there about lengthening shadows when they fall across lawns or meadows from motionless tree-branches that stirs the mind and makes a person feel strangely kind of his worse-hated enemy? What is there about a long white road, disappearing in the twilight over a ridge of hills to some remote, unseen destination that touches the imagination in a way so hard to put into words?", I begin to see more than merely a pleasant description of



two bits of scenery for I have a glimpse at a man's soul, a soul with which I feel something of a spiritual kinship, for I, too, have felt those emotions but without the unique ability to express them, which is so much a part of this man.

When in *The Religion* of a Sceptic, he speaks of religion as being "concerned with that larger and rarer beauty, the beauty that detaches itself, contour by contour, and color by color, from the drama of man's life upon the earth; from his pathetic attempts to give that life a unity, a dignity and graciousness, which in its more chance-scattered elements it so often lacks", I marvel not only at the expression but at the mind behind it which has seized upon so obvious, so essential a part of the religious idea and made it so simply plain to us who read it. The words are ours—they belong, as he says, to all of us—but the unique form in which they appear is his—and only his.

It is as a poet that John Cowper would have liked to win fame. I have heard that even today he says his poetry will outlive his other work, his novels and his essays. It may be true but I cannot believe it. I can only consider it as one more evidence of how little a man may understand the value of his own work. I have but one volume of his poetry, a thin little volume called *Samphire*, published in 1922 and dedicated to Llewellyn. I know how fond he is of this brother, closer probably to him than any other creature, alive or dead, so I know what he must feel about this book. It is too bad not to be able to share his enthusiasm for it—and by that I do not mean to say that it is altogether bad, but one does and should expect better poetry, if it is attempted, from a man with such keen critical discernment about the subject.

He writes in an essay on Byron, "Think what it would be, in this age, suddenly to come upon a poet who could write largely and carelessly, and with a glowing divine fire, about the huge transactions of life; about love and war and the great throbbing pulses of the world's historic events." And in another place on Verlaine, "One comes to understand from it that the soul of poetry is and was and must always be no other thing than music—music not merely of the superficial sound of words, but of those deeper significances and those vaguer associations which words carry with

them; music of the hidden spirit of words, the spirit which originally called them forth from the void and made them vehicles for the inchoate movements of man's unuttered dreams."

The man who perceives so clearly the function, the necessity, the very soul of poetry should give us something better than:

I will come back to you and you to me;  
When the poplar trees blow white and the rooks fly home.  
And the fishermen draw their nets out of the sea;  
I will come back to you and you to me.

When across the flooded weirs the wild-fowl fly;  
When the dead leaves fall from each remembered tree,  
When over the withered grass the plovers cry,  
I will come back to you and you to me.

And I have deliberately chosen a poem which is sufficiently good to be included in anthologies. Compare that, though, with this bit of his prose: "The days pass quickly, and the seasons and the years. From the graves of the darlings of our souls there comes a voice and a cry. A voice bidding us sink into our own true selves before we too are numbered among the dead; a cry bidding us sacrifice everything before we sacrifice the prerogative of our inmost identity. The right to feel and think and dream as persons born into a high inheritance, the inheritance of the mind that has the right to question all things and to hold fast what pleases it in defiance of opinion and logic and probability and argument." Again, I have been deliberate in my choice, selecting not some bit of colorful description, but choosing instead, a discussion of an abstract idea; yet which is the finer poetry—the poem or the prose? Beyond question it is the latter—and just as unquestionably the essay by Powys on Balzac, or the one on Keats, or the one called "The Art of Discrimination", anyone of them, is worth all the poetry he has ever written.

#### IV.

And what of his novels? Before discussing them, I think we should make some attempt to find out what he thinks about the novel. He says in his essay on Balzac that "the whole business of novel writing lies in two things; in the creating of exciting situations and imaginatively suggestive characters—and in making

these characters and situations seem real." Shortly before that, he says, "the habitation of the spirit of true art is the natural soul of man, as it has been from the beginning and as it will be to the end. The soul of man has depths which can only be fathomed by an art which breaks every rule of the formalists and transgresses every technical law." He thinks that the superficial questions of morality must be waved aside before the man of genius; in the first place, they have no reality, no stability—moral ideas change more rapidly than our ability to adapt ourselves to them. Consequently, Powys says: "Because a writer has immense genius there is no earthly reason why his influence upon the world should be good." He is convinced that a mature writer should write for mature minds, minds capable of making their own choice, if choice be possible.

He likes a novel which progresses slowly and considers many things—and implications of things. "I love it when a novel is thick with the solid mass of earth-life, and when its passions spring up volcano-like from glowing pits and bleeding craters of torn convulsed materials . . . I hold the view that in the larger aspects of the creative imagination there is room for many free margins and for many materials that are not slavishly symbolic. I protest from my heart against this tyrannous 'artistic conscience' which insists that every word 'should tell' and every object and person referred to be of 'vital importance' in the evolution of the main theme."

Certainly no one except James Joyce has given us more of the involved processes of the minds of his characters than has John Cowper Powys. They are torn between their desires and the inhibitions of their inheritance. None of them can be said to be entirely normal, but where is the perfectly normal individual or character? In *Ducdame*, a beautiful if depressing book, we find the contention between the natural desire of the mother of Rook and Lexie Ashover for them to marry and to continue the family, and their lack of interest in doing so. It has been many years since I read *Ducdame* but the sinister figure of the village minister and the love of nature which permeates the book still remain in my mind.

*Wolf Solent* was the first novel by Powys to attract popular

attention. Here we find the vague meanderings of the minds of his people, the introduction of characters and events which have no bearing on the general theme, hints at symbolism which have no meaning for the reader, and an uncontrolled pouring out of words to describe scenes which a writer with more restraint would hardly include. But, as I have shown you from his own statements, he thinks those things legitimate to the novel. And I can say that, almost without exception, I found those vague meanderings, the inconsequential characters and events, the descriptions and even the symbolism, of vital interest. And what is more important than that?

The scene in which Selena Gault, once mistress to his father, goes with Wolf to see his father's grave, and that other in her home, when Wolf first calls on her; the visits to the combination home and store of Mr. Malakite, bookseller, and Christie, his daughter; and Gerde Thorpe, whistling in a tree—who can forget them, once having read them? Again, though, it is nature, with all her beauties and cruelties, which interest us most in the book. It is the touch which relates each thing that this writer does to everything else by him. Torn between love for Gerda and Christie, as he thinks, Wolf is actually torn between love of them and love of self; and escapes to a belief in the unreality of life, a belief that "the rude reality that meets our senses has only the appearance of reality. In actual fact, it is in its essence an erratic projection of each individual mind," to quote Llewellyn's statement of John's ideas about such things. And so we have Wolf, determined to endure life—and enjoy it.

It is my opinion that *Wolf Solent* is the best of all the novels of John Cowper Powys. It has not the sex obsession of *Glastonbury Romance*, nor the almost total absence of action that marks *Weymouth Sands*. It displays his method and ideas about novel writing better than do *Ducdame* and *Wood and Stone*. Above all, it is distinguished by a great appreciation of the beauties of nature, and an understanding of the emotion evoked by nature.

In *The Glastonbury Romance*, the conflict is impersonal instead of personal as in *Wolf Solent*. Here it is the battle between those who want to commercialize the village and those who wish to retain and enlarge its religious and aesthetic significance.

In this disturbance, practically every one in the village is involved, and by this involvement are they brought into our knowledge—so that we have a picture of the whole life of Glastonbury. And here is its fundamental weakness. The problems of an individual life can be made vitally interesting for 1,000 pages; its torments and its tribulations, its joys and its satisfaction, its objective actions and its introspections may be so produced that a reader will stay until the bitter end. But however heterogeneous the life of a community, however big its quarrels and their consequences, or how petty, we do not have the same curious interest about a village that we do about an individual, and, in so much confusion, no character becomes definite, so the reader flounders among a multitude of half-impressions. It is the personal that excites attention, not the impersonal—which makes one *Wolf Solent* worth a multitude of *Glastonbury Romances*.

## V.

Theodore Powys has several times pictured an entire community in his books, but he has chosen a wiser course. In every instance he has taken an individual as a hub around whom the life of a village revolves. And so by insinuations and implications we get an understanding of all that takes place, without having the confusion of a constant stream of characters. Further than that, Theodore does not attempt any involved subjective analysing of his characters. To his mind, certain actions are natural—even almost automatic. There is no necessity to look for a reason for them—nor is there any need to believe that they have other than natural consequences. An animal is an animal to him—be it man or beast—so sex is no obsession with him or with his characters; some of them are sufficiently civilized to control their appetites, others are as natural as the cattle in the fields. He accepts both, and bothers about neither.

Unlike John, Theodore did not go to the University but early settled in Dorset to be a farmer, a pursuit which has divided time with another: "Never for a single moment," says Llewellyn in *Skin for Skin*, "since he reached the age of discretion has my brother given so much as a sunflower seed for the busy, practical



life of our western world, that shallow unreflective life which appears to be so exactly adapted to the taste of most Anglo-Saxons. He is like a sportsman who has left his fellow pheasant shooters to go down into the marsh lands after snipe. He is hunting a wild bird, indeed, *a bird that flies zig zag*. He is hunting God."

Many writers are said to have influenced this man's style; among them Bunyan, Jeremy Taylor, Richard Burton—and that source of many of our richest writing fashions, the King James Bible, is an obvious influence. I do not mention Robert Nathan as one of these, for Powys was writing many years before Nathan began, but Nathan is the other modern writer who has the same ease and simplicity, the same sense of beauty and delightful humor. As far apart as the Vermont hills and the English countryside as they are in locale, as divided in their points of view as Dreiser and Cather, yet there is something in their manner, in their understanding of the innate simplicity of the peasant soul, wherever it may be found, that brings them together in my mind.

Those familiar with Robert Nathan will recognize this similarity in such a scene as the following, which is taken from *Mr. Weston's Good Wine*, one of Theodora Powys's best books. Mr. Weston comes to the village of Folly Down on certain business with his son, Michael, and begins to discuss the prospects with him.

"Mr. Grunter," said Michael, "is old, he is also uncouth and shabby; his knees bend outwards as he walks; he has a large homely face, and his looks, to put them as nicely as I can, do not express wisdom."

"He might be the greater fool if they did," said Mr. Weston. "But what has Mr. Vosper done to distinguish himself before the worms have him?"

"He has done nothing," observed Michael, "except what his wife has told him to do; but he has a strange fancy concerning the Angel Inn, where he thinks that one day he may meet an important personage."

"A modest ambition," said Mr. Weston, smiling, "But kindly tell me Michael, and that at once, if you please, what do these three gentlemen drink?"

"All that they can get," replied Michael readily enough.

"Honest men," cried Mr. Weston, gleefully, "We must trade with them at Christmas."

*Mr. Weston's Good Wine*, needless to say, is an allegory. Mr. Weston is God—his good wines are Love and Death. It is a book filled with mysticism and repulsiveness. It has, as well, a very tangible earthiness and as great a sense of wonder and beauty as any book I know. Good and evil are in constant contention. "Thee do know all things," Mr. Bunce says to Mr. Grobe in one place. "Thee do walk in the fields in primrose time, thee do climb down Folly Down Hill, where they little flowers do breed in June, and thee do go down beside green, for to spy what they maids be doing when they be out. But all that do happen outside bain't nothing to what be written down in they wide books. All wonders be written there . . . They large pages be filled wi' the superfluity of naughtiness; all the learned ways of wickedness are writ there. How indeed could a poor man, same as Grunter be, know what to do for the worst wi' a maid, when all they holy matters be only for the wise and the learned." And then he comes out with his question, which I have already quoted, as to whether God or man is responsible for wickedness on the earth. And Mr. Grobe, who had long doubted, could only reply that God did not exist.

But Mr. Weston calls upon Mr. Grobe and leaves with him some of both sorts of wine—the light that is love and the dark that is death.

Mr. Grobe closed the window and returned to his chair. He looked from Mr. Weston's good wine to his book case.

Good wine was there, too, there the thoughts of wise men of all ages were gathered. Good wine that had never yet failed him. Good wine that had ever given a deep drink of the proper color and taste to the gentle reader.

Mr. Grobe looked lovingly at his books, more lovingly than he had ever looked at them before. They had wept and mourned with him, they had sorrowed with him, they had often tried to comfort him, they had reasoned with him about his sorrow and about the loss of his God.

Mr. Grobe drank his wine and pondered, and then it occurred to him that he was seeing the truth; "he believed in God. He had but buried him, a little too deeply perhaps, but in a very good and suitable grave—the heart of a man." And so Mr. Grobe completed the search that has ever possessed T. F. Powys—the search for God.

*Mr. Weston's Good Wine* is, in my opinion, a better book than any other this Powys has written. We see in this short allegory much that John Cowper attempted on a more pretentious scale in *Glastonbury Romance*. We peer into the hearts of men and what we see either draws us or repels. We see good and evil, not as absolutes, but as relatives. This book has little of the extreme ugliness that mars another of Theodore's novels, *Mr. Tasker's Gods*, who are his pigs and are so important to him that he feeds his father to them. It is too brutal, too brutish for my fancy. It may be for that reason that I enjoyed *The House With an Echo* so much, for I read it shortly after *Mr. Tasker's Gods* and these stories, which deserve the banal adjectives, human, gentle, and wise, offered a pleasant contrast to that book. In this collection of rather short, short stories, we have the lowly folk of a country village, in circumstances which border on the sentimental. Not so *The Left Leg*, the title story of which is about obsessed people: Farmer Mew obsessed with the sense of possession, who wants to own and finally does, although to his own extinction, everyone in the village of Maddar; James Gillett, obsessed with the idea of God; and then old Jar, a mystical, legendary figure, obsessed with a sense of justice, who brings about Farmer Mew's downfall. The other two stories in the book, "Hester Dominy" and "Abraham Mar" are anti-climaxes to me after this one.

Theodore has been called the most original of them all, "original both in subject matter and in style", by John Cowper. I do not know that I can say which of these three originals is the most so, but I do see in T. F. a quality that is less evident in Llewellyn and rarely found in John—that is humor—a shy humor, revealing, as all true humor should, a content which causes one to ponder after he has stopped his laughter.

## VI.

Llewellyn has not the humor that Theodore has, nor is he capable of the magnificent, sonorous phrasing that causes one frequently to hold one's breath in awe, while reading John. Llewellyn achieves his effect in a simpler and more feeling fashion. It is probably because of his illness that sentiment has more of an appeal for him than for the others. Not that he is a sentimentalist, but there is

a warmth and a quality of feeling about his work that neither of the other two ever achieves. I have pointed out that we get whatever pictures we may have of the family from him. It is doubtless due to this greater feeling that he has desired to give us their relationship, one with the other. I turn to another of these passages from *Skin for Skin* to introduce Phillippa, the only one of the sisters who has written. Both Llewellyn and his sister were at Theodore's farm for a short vacation.

Many were the happy walks I took with that mysterious and singular girl, who herself would sometimes appear to be the embodiment of the wind she so much loved. On many a rough November afternoon, we descended the narrow winding path which trailed past her beloved elder bush down to the very foot of the white nose . . . How the waves beat against the chalk rocks, and advanced, and receded, and advanced again, over those cold banks of shining pebbles! As always, when in close contact with nature, Phillippa became transfigured. "I am the hills," she cried, "The sea is my lover . . . Yes, I am at ease and understood on these down lands. Once upon them and all is forgotten. These hills never laugh at me or talk behind my back." As we came up her favorite gully, I was almost alarmed, as I looked at her small head, crooning and muttering to the wind. What passionate and intractable spirit had not God caught and imprisoned in my sister's body!

After that, you will not be surprised, I know, when I tell you that *Blackthorn Winter*, Phillippa's only book, is a tale of the English countryside, of that beloved Dorset where Theodore lives. Plot means little in this rather simple story of a farmer's daughter who leaves her blacksmith lover to ramble the countryside with an entrancing gypsy; but it has the same appreciation of nature that distinguishes the books of Phillippa's brothers.

Llewellyn Powys has written only one novel, *Apples Be Ripe*, which deserves but a word or two. It is the story of a young schoolmaster who—from a quixotic impulse—shields a servant girl at a school where he is employed and is consequently accused with her. It is Chris Holback's life as a farm laborer after his discharge from the school, sleeping in hayricks and wandering care-free under the summer skies that makes the book worth reading. But it is not to be compared, for example, to *The Cradle of God*.

*The Cradle of God* is the Jewish people. From their earliest record, Llewellyn tells their story through the crucifixion of Jesus. "The Jews, with their long, long memories, obstinate and obdurate, remained steadfast in their unbelief! They utterly rejected Christianity, and followed their own woeful ways, bearded and with curled locks. They had given a God to the Gentiles, and were drowned and burnt and beaten because they would not believe what their peculiar genius alone had made possible." Yet Llewellyn himself does not believe; but he recognizes the appeal of Christ—"It is the daring of his spirit, with its subversive impulse, that commands the admiration, the adoration of heretics and atheists, even unto this day."

And in another place, he says: "Simple thoughts, of such is the Kingdom of Heaven. The grave night sky was broken for a purpose, was suddenly alive with a heavenly host . . . Mystery above us, mystery below us, what wonder if we dream dreams in the artless fashion of children? It lingers on, this poetic Christian tale, so dear to the desolate heart astray amid unconscious matter. Just as the books of Homer hold us by the simplicity of their golden poetry, so do these others; . . . under the stars, the front gate clicks upon its latch and behold the gate is a gate into an infinite space, homely and prodigal of human security."

Here he shows his spiritual as well as physical kinship with his older brother, John, for in *The Religion of a Sceptic*, John writes: "The birth of our God at Christmas; his death on Good Friday; his resurrection at Easter: these events and all the great festivals that follow . . . have so interwoven themselves with the lives of our ancestors that they have become part and parcel of the seasons themselves; have passed into these seasons, losing something of their realistic value but attaining a far greater poetic beauty . . . Around that unique figure have gathered all the wistful and desperate longings of the heart of man for nearly 2000 years; and it is towards this Christ of the centuries that one's imagination turns with such a sense of rich strange excitement."

I do not know whether to call these religious ideas of theirs humanism or not. They do resemble it in some aspects, but it is to me a strange, a beautiful thing that these two exceptional minds of our time—who occasionally call themselves agnostics and



pagans feel themselves so much a part of humanity—present and past—that they cannot consider themselves apart from it. Because those “wistful and desperate longings of the hearts” of millions of people have gathered around Christ, because those ceremonies of the churches have developed through the centuries as the reverent practices of simple, believing folk, they, indeed, every westerner must accept them. One does not have to believe a fairy story in order to get the beauty out of it—or the truth.

One of the greatest things about *The Cradle of God*, is its appreciation of the poetry of the Old Testament. Llewellyn has published no poetry but no one can read much of him without knowing that he has both the intuition and the soul of poet. When he writes of David's lament about Saul and Jonathan, of the “oracular utterance” of Isaiah, of that whole “line of doleful preachers who appeared, now here, now there, like bitterns booming to themselves of impending calamities”, Amos, Micah and the others, it is a poet speaking about poets. If you have read these superb passages of Scripture only to see if as prophecies you might apply them to this or to past times, you have missed one of the greatest aesthetic pleasures that I know. Let Llewellyn Powys lead you to them and interpret them for you, not from a possible meaning that they may contain but from their sheer beauty and joy of expression. Only a man of genius could have written this book—so take an understanding heart to it. Look not for dogma but for beauty—not for proof but for wisdom.

## VII.

This is true of all the books by the Powys brothers. They pass by the superficialities of the moment in their search for enduring realities. Man and—through man—God are at the end of their quest; permanent values “imbedded in what is transitory”. It is an interest which has given them less popular attention than they deserve. For such is the turmoil in the modern world that we as readers have grown to look for books which either provide escape or else reflect the turbulent present. The Powyses do neither. The problems they present are too portentous for escape—and are too enduring for purely immediate interest. They seek answers to the questions which have echoed down the centuries.

I have purposely avoided evaluation while discussing this family; I am not convinced that evaluation is possible—except from the quality of understanding and enjoyment that I have derived from reading them. Comparisons of place seem to me to be outside the limitations of my discussion. From the work of each of the brothers I have got an increased appreciation of beauty—a heightened perception of the quality of human emotion. Is not that enough? The question of their permanence or their importance is a superficial one compared to those very real effects. On my mind they have made impressions which no amount of time can erase; phrases of theirs have become a part of my mental furniture—to paraphrase Frank Harris. So much for my own feeling; recognizing that “each generation brings a new appetite to life”, I am willing to put the question of permanence into the hands of posterity, where it belongs.

*by Nancy Telfair*

### WHEN ABSENCE BEGINS

Now I must learn the house  
All populate with doom,  
And teach the furniture my ways  
In each desolate room.  
I must sweep out the years  
Though treasured every dust,  
And scrub your footsteps off the door  
And loneliness adjust.

by Arthur E. DuBois

## AMONG THE QUARTERLIES

A gentleman is a man of parts. A pedant or antiquarian or academician is a man of pieces, lop-sided, provincial in manners, limited in understanding. Down through the ages from the Greek this tradition has persisted with variations until it has become classic. The feeling has always been that the man of pieces was incapable of self-control, useful for only odd jobs, a jack of one trade. The gentleman has acquired his distinction, not by birth, but by the cultivation of all his faculties to make himself useful and pleasant. No man of leisure, he has been the director or leader.

For the last fifty years, paradoxically, the man of pieces has been regarded as the gentleman among English and, in general, all Liberal Arts scholars. His character is now subject to analysis from many quarters—unfortunately not from many quarterlies.

John Crowe Ransom, writing "Criticism, Inc." for the autumn *Virginia Quarterly*, deals the practising English scholar a body blow. His article raises so many questions that it is not entirely within the scope of this number of "Among the Quarterlies". The fundamental question is, Why the English professor, what is wrong with him? Mr. Ransom, I think, oversimplifies his answer. He says the English professor has been too much the thoughtless historian, too little the trained critic. He has become non-essential because he has therefore never understood his subject. Mr. Ransom's answer is not only over-simple, I think, but like the title of his article an illustration of what may be wrong with his colleagues.

### I.

The Liberal Arts professor has been scared. He has withdrawn into his shell. But the shell, unlike the snail's or turtle's, though

it has slowed him up, has never fitted him or become a natural part of him. He was meant to be naked! He has not been armored in a changing world.

Scared, the English professor has wanted to play safe. He has called his training "a discipline" and justified any procedures he might take by some such shibboleth as "discipline". Certainly the veriest Puritan could not object to "discipline". The professor has been afraid that he might be wrong. Many an undisciplined critic, after all, has been wrong—been centuries out of date, a century in advance of his time! The professor has decided, accordingly, that he will not be a critic, at least not in the ordinary sense. Instead, he will be a scientist!

That is to say, the professor will invent for himself a set of tools or methods or vocabularies behind which he will be invulnerable—and offensive! He has said to himself, as the gangster said to himself, "I will get me a gat." He has become a gangster, a virtuoso, or methodist. If he calls his flower a *viola tricolor hortensis* nobody will know he means a pansy and pluck him. If he writes about the exploitation of the Trojans nobody will suppose he has opinions about the exploitation of the Spaniards and proceed to exploit him. He does finger-exercises in public so that nobody will suspect his heavy-handedness in private.

The professor's works are likely to be academic exercises in the use of a technique—one hides from society behind a gun or one hides from society by burying one's head or one hides from society by burying one's self with cross-word puzzles. The academic technique requires an academic jargon, an academic appearance (hat too straight on the head, exact footnotes), an academic behavior (showing "on the one hand", then "on the other hand", reviewing the history of a problem before tackling it), and an academic subject (commonly pre-Victorian).

Theoretically, the person who does these exercises cannot go wrong—at least, not to any criminal extent—though the big person has always been in danger of being mobbed, jailed, or crucified. The professor, exercising, is a man in armor, the knight of a romance sure of killing his dragon rather than the knight of fact risking his life. He is at a joust rather than a war. His articles may be dull like a rusty sword, but no harm will come to him.

Scared, wanting to play safe, the professor has accordingly devoted himself mainly to the past. Many rich men buy only Old Masters for the same reason that many universities hire only these virtuosi—safely dead men teach but unfortunately do not give grades! The professor has called himself, over-modestly, an historian, a literary historian. But curiously the historians themselves have the English professors' very faults. And the truth of the matter is that the English scholar has not often been either critic or historian. He has been, instead, the antiquarian, which is a safer career. Our museums are filling up with curiosia.

Having something like a technique and a subject of his own, the professor has created something of an artlessness for the sake of artlessness. He writes, edits, subscribes to, and occasionally reads his own journals. When he makes a book he expects publishers to find it of such little general interest that he will be required to subsidize it. This artless person, this creature of little faith—anyone, even a publisher, can predict what he will do; worse, can more surely foretell what he will not do.

Wishing to be only right, working for himself and his own peculiar kind, the English professor creates exercises that are only static. His articles begin and end completely in themselves, impersonally: they seldom touch anything human like the emotions or the imagination or anything inhuman like reason. This fact means that they are inartistic, as Poe indicated long ago when he told why he wrote the last two stanzas of "The Raven". But since scholars are not trying to be artistic, perhaps it is more important to note that work is static, is actually completed, only when it deals with a dead subject or problem. Only the dead are done.

This methodical jargonier is a sorry, unimportant figure. Newspapers do not even bother to send reporters to his congresses though these congresses bring together the best of his kind. The poor scholar grows tired of even himself. Who does not groan over *ELH*, *Studies in Philology*, *Philological Quarterly*, *Modern Philology*, *PMLA*? Even among English professors who reads in these journals more than the table of contents and an occasional article, usually in his own little field or by a friend?



## II.

But this is the worst side of the picture of the professor. Both in explanation and justification, there is much to be said for him. To begin with, his faults are not different from those of the little lawyer, of anyone who hides behind a professional decorum or jargon and calls a spade an agricultural implement. These decorous persons, one and all, interest themselves only in the facts rather than in the meanings of the facts in their field. They are name-callers. Beside the lawyer, the English professor appears noble, however, for whatever his limitations he has used his fold-erols for the exploitation of only himself, not others: he has been his own victim.<sup>1</sup> The professor has served his clients, his students, without any hope of having a salary equivalent to that of an ordinary executive, physician, or lawyer.

The professor's caution has had good causes. He has had to conform even his professional opinion, as on literature, to the very amateurish art-opinions of doctors, lawyers, merchants, thieves in his community where they have the special immunities belonging to "parents" and "alumni". The parent will never question the doctor's verdict about measles or the lawyer's about legal damages; but he never will accept the educator's opinion about fitnesses to think.

The professor has had to be "holier than thou", has had to wear his hat over-straight on his head. For parents may drink or swear or bear false witness. But the tutors of the young must keep their breaths sweet. The professor has had to reserve his social, political, personal convictions to himself, having no special privileges like the lawyer to legislate the opinions of others on all matters including art and education.

It would not be surprising that only little men entered the profession of teaching English under these circumstances; or, if they did, that they produced only little work. It is no fun to spend years of time and money to get one, two, three degrees, be aware

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<sup>1</sup>Whoever uses his head, in the name of the Law! shall lose it. "Testimony was offered that Bridges hit Shoemaker on the head with a gun butt but, since the indictment stipulated injuries on 'the body and limbs' of Shoemaker, Judge Dewell ordered the testimony stricken out. He ruled that the head was not part of the body." From a news item in the *New York Times*, quoted from *The New Republic*, LXXXIII (1 Dec., 1937), 103.

that one must then write books as well as teach children, that one must publish those books at one's own expense out of a salary varying, when one is young, from \$1600 to \$2500 which must also support the family one is starting.

The amazing thing is that big men—Manley, Kittredge, Stoll, Lowes, Malone, Havens, Sherburn, Crane, Ransom, Klaeber, Baugh, Eaton, C. Brown, Foerster, Pound, Lovejoy, Bredvold, Root, Hanford, S. P. Chase, and fifty others—have come in the profession at all or remained in it more than two years when they did come.

But the Romans have always been able to find and profit by their Greek slaves. The fact still remains that as a group the professionals have become unnecessarily little and jargonic. Their disciplines thwart and frustrate any real liveliness or spirit in the neophytes. Any sign of improvement glares. The improver is heroic.

The rebel against professional decorum is a hero, and his kind is increasing in numbers. Such persons have a long, hard fight ahead of them: the Romans have only to sit. The Greek will be made to feel odd, hickish, barbaric, pagan, Hairy-Apelike. No journals will be available for his work. He will be given a job in the sticks, with an over-heavy schedule and an over-light salary, away from libraries and with slight chances of publishing any book he may write.

Such a person must become Tamerlane-like. He will learn to feel that his genius is an evil genius, driving him to his own self-destruction. In academic circles he will be taught to feel that a man who follows his natural bent is crooked!

### III.

What are the signs of improvement? Unfortunately they are few. They include (1) the rebelliousness of the graduate student. But he has long, perhaps always, been discontented. He is apt, moreover, to be sophomoric—after being hazed, the freshman wants his turn at the paddle.

The signs include (2) the recent discussion of the editorial

policies of *PMLA*.<sup>2</sup> They include (3) the kind of discussion John Crowe Ransom leads in the *Virginia Quarterly*. And they include finally (4) the general quarterlies. Only the last two signs are proper to our reading here.

Mr. Ransom cites with approval the change of policy for English departments recommended by Ronald S. Crane in the *English Journal*. Professor Crane's proposal is that students of English shall become critics rather than historians; also, one gathers, that criticism should be made exacter, like a science.

I should like to believe in Professor Crane. He has judgment keener perhaps than that of any other living English scholar. But he has been notorious as a methodist among methodists: his course in bibliographical methodologies is distinguished. Still, he has not yet royally applied his princely methods to any regal project: chiefly, as is the way with majesty, he has devoted himself to reducing the majesty of others. Moreover, his interests have been, so far as it is just to judge, mainly historical. He has stressed, as I remember it, something like the "current of ideas". Certainly one thinks of Professor Crane without thinking of the 18th century. The general effect of his work is to multiply distinctions within that period and distinguish it from other periods, an historical process.

Mr. Ransom believes that, though modestly, Mr. Crane is initiating at Chicago an important reform. He is under the impression that it consists yet mainly of applying Aristotle to literature, a method. The project sounds ominous to me. One jargon or method is substituted for another jargon or method, and the practitioner is called a critic rather than an historian. At Chicago we seem to have the forerunnings of a traditionalism, a neoclassicism, the straitening, academic qualities of which were demonstrated nearly two hundred years ago. Professor Crane, like Irving Babbitt, would have us to be pre-Hazlitt-DeQuincey-Wordsworth. What we need most to be in criticism is post-everybody!

Mr. Ransom's suggestions seem nearly as unpromising. He believes that the English scholar should study literature and so become a critic, not an historian. He tries to eliminate subjects

<sup>2</sup>A wit at Chicago's Meeting of the Modern Language Association (Dec. 1937) described it as the "Modern *Languish* Association".—[Editor's sympathetic addendum.]

or methods not proper to criticism. The nature and function of criticism is so large a topic that it must be passed over here. But it is notable that finally Mr. Ransom is left pretty much with only techniques, what distinguishes poetry or art from prose or life, as a proper subject for the scholar's work.

This delimitation seems ominous to me. It neglects the larger sources of literature which technique only serves. It reminds me greatly of Mr. Besant's attitude toward the novel, an attitude which Henry James took neatly in hand. It also reminds me of an ironic letter which McFee in self-defense had to write to a young gentleman at Yale. It is the approach of a Babbitt to literature, of a man wanting someone to tell him a sure-fire technique for writing a best-seller or for guessing which horse will win at the track so that he can at once cash in on a million dollars and never have to work any more at all. Mr. Ransom would encourage the study of patterns rather than form and produce ultimately a virtuosity emptier than what we now have.

#### IV.

The general quarterlies seem hardly better than the specialized quarterlies. They are in their way as objectionably jargonic. They, too, play safe. They run with the pack. One cannot tell them apart, can hardly guess which is even Democrat, which Republican, or why. The favorite trick of most of them in criticism is to publish the letters of a person not long dead or to publish pleasant gossip about living writers.

Since the general quarterly has been and will be discussed in this department we need not now stay long with it. It is significant, however, that no one has a very apparent program or point of view or characteristic subject matter. The average quarterly article might have been published in any of the quarterlies; in fact, the same writers seem to write for all. Of the southern quarterlies which in 1937 has courageously discussed one of the several regional social problems the South faces?

A point of view is as essential to criticism as it is an essential element in character and therefore an essential source of distinction in writing, painting, editing, or anything else. A jellyfish is not an apt editor though he may be a good edible.

For criticism with body or background one has to go to either Catholic-Protestant or leftist magazines. Of the two the leftist are much more intelligently, thoughtfully, and generously written and edited. The Catholics and Protestants are so fearful of their own souls that they fear each other too much to be Christian. But both the religious and radical journals make the common error of identifying literature or art with one of its elements.

We have been aware of the affinities between literature and religion for so long that we hardly need any longer to be reminded: their materials and functions are similar, sometimes identical. But especially as humanists we have so over-stressed the moral qualities of art that we have lost art in morality, become too good for art on its merry mounts. The amoral qualities of art—sometimes they are social, sometimes personal—are equally important and uplifting. The classic work is equally Protestant or Catholic, what matter? Dante is more Protestant than Milton, Milton more Catholic than Dante. The differences between Protestant and Catholic have no valid bearing upon the merits of art as art. Accordingly, though bodied, the criticism of the religious journals seems to waste our time in irrelevant prejudices or name-calling.

The leftists run a similar risk with the religionists. One identifies art with religion, the other with sociology or economics. Both are at least partly in error. All agree only in wishing to be uplifting. Anyway, the Leftists will ultimately produce their academic criticism too.

But the Leftists are still young as critics. They are only beginning to test the validity of the aesthetic pronouncements of such amateurs in art as Marx, Lenin, and so on. This testing is stimulating to everyone concerned. And the Leftist critics have the added virtue of insisting upon social and economic environment as a source of literary character. It is only one source. But perhaps it is the most important one. In any case, it has been almost wholly neglected except implicitly in the work of such folklorists as Hartland or such historian-environmentalists as Sainte-Beuve.

Groping though Leftist criticism yet is, among recent quarterlies, *The Marxist Quarterly* has, I think as an outsider, maintained the maturest standard for reviews. But the ultimate trend of its



aesthetics is perhaps even more straitening than that of the religionists. And socialists or communists, Stalinites or Trozskites are already too involved in name-calling.

## V.

Certain suggestions seem to me to follow from these observations. The profession at large should glad-hand Messrs. Crane and Ransom. It is to be hoped that each may develop a quarterly in which his ideas will be promoted and in which persons of similar sympathies may find a ready acceptance. In this way the colorless appearance of the quarterly world will change a little—the sun will begin to come out. Let Mr. Crane use his head, his memory and his judgment! Let him evolve his Aristotelian principles! And let us pay them more than a casual attention! Let Mr. Ransom also use his fingers and trace and name his patterns.

But ultimately literature and criticism are produced by human beings. Their tools are limited but not so ignobly limited as Messrs. Crane and Ransom might lead us to think. In addition to the kinaesthetic senses, there are sight, smell, hearing, tasting. And the world appears in a false light if it does not appear as sensible, sensitive, sentient, sensational, sensualist, sentimental, senseless, and nonsensical. In addition to the senses and such intellectual faculties as judgment or memory, there are also reason, the emotions, the instincts, the imagination, and such combinative faculties as have gone under the names of wit, sense of humor, irony, intuition, illative sensation, creative reason, or creative imagination. These faculties have an equal validity with each other, and the ideal gentleman uses more than one or two of them: he is a man of parts even as a scholar.

Even in scholarship it is to be hoped that men using most of their faculties will come along, rise superior to their techniques or patterns or methods: such men will be the classic geniuses in criticism and, like Shakespeare, survive their own short days.

## VI.

But even the biggest genius will sometimes err in taste, sympathy, judgment, vision. Only the dead are perfect! One of the

most vicious notions we entertain is that a live person must be always only right or always only wrong. To be always right, one must do nothing but sleep and eat and hoe; and to do nothing but sleep and eat and hoe, not to rise joyously once in one's life to see a sunrise, not once to pack one's clothes and run away from home, not once to climb hastily out of a figurative back window, is to have been inhuman, a very beast.

Any procedure that seems to promise infallibility is, at the instant of promise, a demonstrable lie, a cheat, an idol-in-a-cave worshipping procedure, a taboo. Even in the exactest sciences techniques and tools require continuous improvement. And the methodical person is likely to be a quixotic philosopher, clad in steel armor in ages of gas-warfare.

In fact, we need men big enough to be awfully wrong. And this need is perhaps the only excuse that can be made for Hitler and Mussolini. For often we clarify our ideals only by fighting for them, and one cannot fight in the dark, not knowing what weapons have been chosen by one's opponents, how many they are, and what the lay of the ground may be.

#### VII.

It is not necessary not to smile sometimes, even professionally. Literature is no sour-puss matter, as Puritans have sometimes realized to their infinite uneasiness. After all, literature, art, is life that has in it from its creator some excess energy, as of Coleridgean joy, Wordsworthian meditation, Hardy-like patterns, Donne-up "beauty". Jamesian bigness or completeness of vision. Excess energy is a spark. It should lead to action—even the greatest art has always been propagandistic, as religionists and homebodies have been the first to require. In its purest form, producing safer katharses, action is resident in tears or laughter. Tears or laughter are, in fact, art actions.

What is literature for when living, as in depressions,  
is no fun?

#### VIII.

In the matter of jargon, certain distinctions need to be made, as between the denotative and the connotative word. It strikes

me as tragic that specialists should have to work so much alone, evolving their own terminologies, that their language tends to become exclusively their own. Two thoughtful critics in one field can hardly understand each other, and the historian and the literary historian can hardly talk. Except in the matter of word-usage not much can be done, I suppose, to improve this situation.

Such terms as "democracy", "revolution", "socialism", "Catholicity", "the classic", "romanticism", "realism", "idealism", "nature", "truth", "freedom", "liberty", "honor" belong to the poet and the common man. They are race-words analogous to such family words as "home", "love", "arms", "legs", "pansies", "heart's-ease", and so on. The race-words mean little in themselves. They are cumulative or growing words, the meaning of which adds to itself. They are exact words only as contexts are exact, though it is obvious that, for example, "truth" and "honor" are often incompatible and that "revolution" and "Catholicity" are hardly synonymous. In conversations and in the arts, there is always time to make contexts exact; similarly, in the home there is always time to nurse a broken leg—there has to be!

The unavailability of these words for scientific usages of sorts is apparent in the fact that one has to distinguish many kinds of socialism: Marxist, Christian, even National, with many varieties in each. The specialist will have to use other words sometimes, if only because within his field he will have to make and name distinctions which are no concern to the artists or persons of general education. The specialist will have to use other words, to have his medical lingo which only the physician-surgeon can understand, except when he talks to non-specialists! His failure to distinguish between the denotative and connotative will waste his time as a critic or his energy as a propagandist of his art or criticism.

No matter how much he specializes, however, he still cannot afford to ignore the value of each set of words. If he tries to rid himself of the connotative words he will become a mere nominalist, a kind of Ben Gunn too long alone on Treasure Island, a person only his own kind can understand.

The present tendency, represented for example by Kenneth Burke, seems to be to spread words, to take a technical term, representing a technique or strategy in one field, and translate it

to another field to identify a similar strategy there. This tendency seems to me, on the whole, more healthful than the attempt, often made, to delimit words with preciser meanings than they can ever have as they come from the mouths of babes, dope-fiends, idealists, poets. In fact, the validity of a technical word is demonstrated socially only if it is taken over by the poets and the people. Otherwise, it remains an art-for-art's-sake or science-for-science's-sake word, a shibboleth, a taboo.

A poem only begins to be written by its author. While it lives critics continue writing it. Shakespeare, therefore, becomes Victorian, then modern. "Revolution" only begins to be meaningful to the American at the time of the French and American Revolutions. The word grows in the period of industrial and ideational (Darwinian) revolutions, meaning something even sinister when laissez-faire is respected. "Freedom" means one thing in the South, another thing in the North, though both sections belong to the "land of the free": it grows variously at the times of the Revolutionary, Mexican, Civil, Spanish, and the World Wars. Beauty means one thing to a sensationalist-realist like Poe; another thing to a sentient surrealist, something else to a sensible rationalist. But, still, the poem, the word retains identities of their own without which the world would be paler, emptier.

After all, it is only in the field of the connotative or homely word that the specialists in the various arts and sciences can ever meet. And it is only in this field, too, that one can generalize outside a particular study, can promote non-professional causes, can enlarge professional influence. These connotative words are our classics in diction, just as Shakespeare is a classic among writers. The fate of the race, if not that of the individual specialist, resides in them! We cannot afford to be nominalist! We must take time out for contexts!"

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<sup>2</sup>Nowhere is this need more apparent than in present-day usages of such words as "democracy", "Fascism", "communism", "industry". One needs, of course, to distinguish between a loose or nominalistic usage of connotative words and an accurate or idiomatic usage. In the 18th century writers managed like Pope to be fairly articulate though they used the connotative word "nature" in several denoting senses. We who try to read these writers become inarticulate if we try to fix one denotative meaning to all the "natures"—so doing, we confuse the word itself with one of its elements. Not every criminal is a "communist", after all, and not yet has every communist been proved criminal. "Revolution" does not mean one thing in early America, an entirely different thing

## IX.

Specialization is eminently needful. Anyone is an impractical fool who does not specialize nowadays. But the aims of specialization and the character of the specialist need to be examined. We are likely to hire quacks for our worst dis-eases. It is not enough to develop in one science one technique or word and propagate it forever. The uses science or art are to serve are most important. And when the specialist serves only himself he is no longer a pretty character. Accordingly, tactics or strategies are as important as techniques. As teachers or writers, English scholars need to practise, I think, putting their knowledge and insights to work.

This is not to say that literature or scholarship is exclusively moral or social or both. But if we cannot believe that art or criticism serves any other purpose than to keep us busy so that we get into no mischief, then we can hardly believe in ourselves as professors either.

It is probably impossible to over-specialize. But one can specialize in a little way, and get lost in the trees of one's techniques or knowledges. One can also specialize in an artificial way. English scholars are now required to specialize in periods: why not in strategies? why not in temperaments, like that of the mystic? Or one can specialize in a big way and see the woods and the way out of them. One can specialize in facts or curiosa. Or one can specialize in the spirit or meaning of facts. Similarly, one can specialize in lingos, in only denotative words. If so, one hates the negro or jew or pagan because of his name: one buries the alien (in the potter's field) who brought new dyes or patterns for the potter-genius. Or one can specialize in language, in connotative

in France, Spain, or Russia or in the arts and sciences and business, and still another thing in America now. Revolving, revolution can mean progress. It can be orderly and tight or anarchic and loose. Every year the automobile industry has a minor revolution, about every ten years a major one. We discredit this initiativeness if we discredit the term "revolution". A loose use of "revolution" is apt to result in loose revolutions, and these are disastrous. In short, as a rose is a rose is arose or a horse is a horse though fat or lean so a revolution is a revolution. The defining of connotative words or accurate usages of them are normally expansive processes, enlarging a use of a word at a given time for a given purpose to its full-grown scope.



words, and be humane and adult. Our journals certainly give the impression that we specialize in facts and lingos.

### X.

The distinction between critic and literary historian seems to me mainly artificial except as one needs words to name those who deal chiefly with present-day works and those who deal specially with works originating in the past. The functions of both critic and literary historian are presumably the same, to promote the understanding and the usefulness or valuing of art. Though Mr. Ransom would reject them from the fold, reviewers, paraphrasers, translators are still useful critics. On occasion the critic is invaluable who tells only what a work means to him. The main difficulty is perhaps only that the literary historian has been too little "critical" and the critic too seldom "historical".

The critic performs classics and so keeps or rejects works from the repertoires of himself and his reading audience. He makes works transcend the time and place and author of their creation. The literary historian deals with works older in origin than present-day. He performs the older classics. But after all, there are only three times: past, present, and future. Of these the present is most important. And the past *per se* is not important at all. The critical and historical tense are both perfect tenses. But the antiquarian uses only the past tense and like Stoll therefore relegates works to the first period of their existence only, so helping to kill them. The critic has often used only the present tense in his reviews, confining the work under consideration exclusively to our time, not showing how from its materials, patterns, distinctions of form or style even in our own time it has grown from the past into the future. The great critic and literary historian are identical, and their tense is not past, present, or future, but perfect.

### XI.

Our greatest need seems to be a certain amount of self-respect, perhaps a little less of self-questioning as critic-historians, a lot more of generous self-confidence, self-confidence as responsible specialists among other specialists but mainly self-confidence in

ourselves as specialists who believe more in the object of our devotions and less in the rituals, rigmaroles, lingos, methods thereof. As an aid perhaps even a Liberal Arts Union would not be amiss.

Especially, the profession needs to believe in itself enough to let its young break their own necks or stick their own chins out in the sky. In the graduate schools and in small colleges like the University of Rochester, youngsters have to act like oldsters. Age is not a matter of years. Old and little men have a common want of vigor. Once Rochester was so infernally watchful, don't-do-that-ish, paternalistic, that even its students acted like defeated old men—it had no "young" faculty. In the graduate schools it has not always been pleasant to watch students lose their high spirits at the same time that they acquired prison pallors in the stacks.

The drama of specialized work, of suiting the man to his peculiar job and then of helping him do it enthusiastically—this is a much neglected function of the English professor especially in the graduate schools. Chicago needs a few romanticists in its Gothic halls. Not all of its graduate students can or ought to be Aristotelian, and Aristotle himself would loom only half so great in our esteem had there not also been Plato and, more important, neo-Platonists.

This drama involves not only suiting the student to his thesis project. Still more, it involves fitting him for his life work, mainly teaching. The men are only too few who have been lucky enough to find positions with Folger or Huntington Libraries and so be able to continue the library work they were specially trained to do. The rest of us had to forget a great deal we once thought we knew, leave behind a great deal of luggage we once were saddled with, and learn for ourselves what can meaningfully be communicated to undergraduates and even Masters and what language has to be used for such communication.

The specialist in English, in short, is only a human being fighting against self-extinction in a particular corner of chaos. His only weapons, ultimately, are his own faculties. Some of these specialists use their heads, others use their hands. Some see their foes. Others smell them. It would seem to be a terrific waste to

try to make a person with a poor nose but excellent eyes smell! A reasonable person need not always be sensible or judicious.

Men with large hearts are needed on the editorial stools of the quarterlies as well as in professional chairs. They are not created by fear and trembling, by being made over into gangsters which they were not. They are created by faith in themselves and their objectives.

#### NOTES

Reviewing the work of this Department for 1937, I am more depressed by what was not said than impressed by what was. Regionalism! The responses of the regionalist are, after all, the responses of all minority groups, the study of whom becomes therefore useful to the negro in the University of North Carolina, the communist at Princeton, the Protestant at Catholic University, the Catholic at Wesleyan, the Republican at Commonwealth, or the genius anywhere.

Form! If character is the ultimate source of distinction in art, practically synonymous with form or style in their largest aspects, it follows that there will be all sorts of valid forms: reasonable, emotional, sensational, etc. A great deal of criticism spends itself reproving a rationalist for not being a sensationalist. The romanticist writers have fared worst, especially at the hands of common-sensists like Babbitt or sophists like students of the 18th century beginning with Jeffrey's colleagues and including T. S. Eliot and Matthew Arnold.

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In keeping with a distinction everybody seems inclined to make, between history and criticism, I suggest that the proper function of the learned journal is the promotion of history; that of the general quarterly, the promotion of criticism. But both have a common function too, to satisfy professionals, specialists, educated, responsible persons, not children or men on the streets; and to exhibit a big and ascertainable critical point of view or character.

The general quarterly seems to me in 1937 to have failed in this objective quite as often as the learned quarterly. The general quarterlies are not distinctive. They are not, in general, courage-

ous. They have no definite objectives. One looks in vain in them for mature discussions of problems, social or literary, which adults cannot nowadays afford to neglect.

Prettiness, childishness, obvious amateurishness, infantile laughter or tears, boyish wishfulness in poetry or politics—these belong to the popular monthlies and weeklies, not to the widely-spaced quarterlies. The quarterlies should have climbed Fool's Hill. They ought not to need to talk about the facts of life behind a closed door, smirking, or to blush when they are mentioned, as if wonder or conviction or experience or knowledge were obscene or dangerous.

After all, what are taboos but mainly words by which the strong of body, soul, or mind are temporarily enslaved to the weak of body, soul, or mind. The weak hide their heads in the sand. When because we name them so-and-so we whites refuse to sit with and listen to the adult negro, we do violence to our responsible humanity, our civilization, our arts. We do likewise when as Protestants we ignore Catholics; when we are Germanic and ostracize Jews; when we are Republican-Democrat and jail Communist-Socialist for having an honest opinion; when we are humanist and attack the romanticist. If our *alter egos* urge their convictions as decently and maturely as we do, they are not different in kind. It would be pleasant to leave Potter's Field empty. Hiding our heads like ostriches in the sands of time, at least, will result only in our getting sand in our eyes and, probably, in losing our tail-feathers. Name-calling won't help us!

Nobody need be romantic, Communist-Socialist, Catholic, Jew or Negro if he can help it! We urge only decent self-respect, willingness to listen as well as talk, to take as well as give. We urge this for others if only because we want it for ourselves. We feel that the quarterly should be a table set in a dining room, not a nursery, loaded with food and drink, and surrounded by good fellows who have reached their majorities in spite of their ages, colors, home-loyalties, names, or creeds. This room should not be full of mirrors: We dine overmuch with only ourselves weekly.

In the quarterlies I am afraid mainly saint has fought and converted saint with names, as Christian elsewhere fights Christian under the denomination "Protestant" or "Catholic" or "Presby-

terian" or "Methodist", as Democrat fights Republican for the name of "Liberal", as radical fights radical under the denomination of "Communist", "Socialist", "Catholic Radical", "New American", as man fights man in the name of Japan or China, or as time-server fights time-server under the heading of "romanticist" or "realist". Only names have mattered. While this happens Constantinople and the arts, with a lot between, are lost.

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In 1937, an ideal subscriber might have spent \$21.50 for about 3670 pages of learned quarterly, as follows. \$2.50, *ELH*, about 320 pages; \$3.00, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 625 pages; *Modern Philology*, about 440 pages, \$2.00; *Philological Quarterly*, about 430 pages; \$5.00, *PMLA*, about 1220 pages; \$4.00, *Studies in Philology*, 625 pages.

This subscriber's budget would still have to provide for such still more specialized organs as *Speculum*, *Southern Folklore*, *American Speech*, *American Literature*, *Modern Language Notes*. He would still have to budget such foreign organs as *Year's Work*, *Modern Humanities Research Association Bulletin*, *Englische Studien*, *English Studies*. He would yet have no journals in affiliated fields, not one of the sixty or so in history, none in education, philosophy, psychology, the romance languages, the social sciences.

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In 1937, an ideal subscriber might have spent \$24.50 for about 5100 pages of general quarterly, as follows: \$2.00, *American Scholar*, 410 pages; \$1.50, *Frontier and Midland*, about 300 pages; \$4.00, *North American Review*, about 830 pages; \$3.00, *SEWANEER REVIEW*, 510 pages; \$3.00, *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 490 pages; \$3.00, *Southern Review*, about 840 pages; \$2.00, *Southwest Review*, about 500 pages; \$3.00, *Virginia Quarterly*, 640 pages; \$3.00, *Yale Review*, about 860 pages.

Such a subscriber would yet be unacquainted with such other American University publications as *The Personalist* or *Fleur de Lis*. He would not know such English and Canadian quarterlies as *Criterion*, *Dalhousie Review*, *Queen's Quarterly*. He probably could not afford even the outstanding little fiction and poetry quarterlies like *Poetry*, *Fantasy*, and so on.



If the proper critical tense is a perfect tense. it will involve the present. I have not been able to check thoroughly since not all of the four numbers are out, but I think no learned journal in 1937 will have published a full-length article on anyone later than William Morris. Our tools are not very useful if they can probe only the past over which, now, we have absolute control—we make the past almost as much as it makes us! The article seems to me antiquarian which does not contact the present by dealing with a live problem, a live word, a live personality, a live technique, or a live work. We shall have to take for what they are worth the ironies that any dead subject seems to live the more one works over it, that even antiquarian work proves often useful, commonly in only a footnotable way, in bigger works, and that, since much of little worth must be grasped before reaches can be made practically, as creative teachers or writers we shall still have to do a good deal of uncreative paraphrasing. The fact still remains that the learned journals have been in 1937 unexceptionally and inexcusably antiquarian, other words for which may be "lazy" or "cowardly".

The hardest irony is that often the most professionally unlovely beings are personally the most lovable: one begins to hate man and like men, to admire professors and loathe the professor. But quarterly readers are experienced enough to know that to disagree with a person is not to dislike his person. In fact, one cannot respect one's self in victory or defeat if one has not also respected one's enemy. "Friend" and "foe" in the North or South, in fact, have excellent connotations among intelligent loyalists, and the "friendly enemy" is no paradox, even outside the movies, if the spirit of the fight has been: May the best man win! This spirit should also be, May I be the best man (or the groom).

by Dudley Fitts

## "THERE WAS NO ONE ALWAYS UNDERNEATH THE BED"

NEW WRITING. Numbers I and II. Edited by John Lehman. London: John Lane, the Bodley Head. 1936. Pp. 223 and 245.

THE NEW CARAVAN. Edited by Alfred Kreymborg, Lewis Mumford, and Paul Rosenfeld. New York: W. W. Norton and Company. 1936. P. 663. \$3.95

NEW DIRECTIONS IN PROSE AND POETRY. Edited by James Laughlin IV. Norfolk, Conn. New Directions. 1936. Pp. not numbered.

These three publications serve the same end: the printing of material which for one reason or another could scarcely be printed elsewhere. The two attractively designed volumes of *New Writing* aim at 'providing an outlet for those prose writers, among others whose work is too unorthodox in length or style to be suitable for the established monthly and quarterly magazines'. The *New Caravan*, like its four predecessors, hopes, 'to gain hearings for [America's] hitherto unheard or insufficiently remarked literary voices', in a setting 'absolutely free of the arbitrary and irritating requirements of the specialized magazine or the commercial market'. *New Directions* is a further contribution to *transition's* 'Revolution of the Word', with an added purpose that *transition* might regard with some suspicion: that is, to effect 'a housecleaning of language, . . . a hacking away of dead wood' in the interests of social reform, which in this case seems to mean the Social Credit system of Major Douglas. *New Writing* and *The New Caravan* are sufficiently alike to be discussed together; *New Directions* is avowedly experimental in content and in form, and I shall consider it separately.

The scope of the British publication is wider than that of the American in that it includes a great deal of translation: five pieces from the Russian, five from the French, six in prose from the German (and three poems from Hölderlin, translated by Stephen Spender), one from the Italian and one from the Chinese. Curiously,

these translations (especially John Rodker's admirable rendering of two stories by André Chamson) seem smoother, more graceful, more authentic, than much of the original work; but the standard of literacy is high—much higher, indeed, than that of the *Caravan*. With a few signal exceptions, the contributors to *New Writing* are good technicians; with fewer exceptions, the Americans are not. Yet for all this skill *New Writing* is dull reading.

It has always seemed to me that the last story in Hemingway's *In Our Time* is one of the masterpieces of modern prose technic. I have not looked at it for years; indeed, I have now forgotten what it is called; but I can still feel the extraordinary quality of that writing. Nothing happens: the piece is simply an account of a day's fishing; but the smells and the textures and the tastes of that day are all there in the words: not described by the words, but utterly and amazingly recreated *in* the words. It is difficult to say exactly what I want to say; but somehow, for one who is probably less interested in fishing than in any other occupation in the world, that day's experience becomes hugely important; so that now, when I have forgotten all the excitement and colour of Hemingway's novels, I can remember the purity, the almost tactile, impact of those few pages. This kind of writing is all too rare, and I mention Hemingway's story because in the first volume of *New Writing* there is a piece that moves me in precisely the same way: André Chamson's 'My Enemy'. Here again is a minimum of plot: two boys, enemies of long standing, are temporarily brought together by the experience of climbing a dangerous mountainside; but there is a vitality, a passion in the writing itself, that makes the trivial episode eternally significant. As in Hemingway's story, the words are charged with something beyond meaning, and the description of a boy swimming in a cold dark pool persists in the memory long after the violences of the other stories have faded quite away.

And what violences there are, and what unconvincing violences! We might as well inspect the manner at its worst:

"You've lived through a good deal, Comrade, haven't you?"

"More than you would ever be able to imagine. . . My husband was leader of one of the partisan divisions. He came home severely wounded. Our village was taken by the

Whites, and ours was the first home the invaders entered. Perhaps someone denounced us. They seized my husband, bound him, and cried: 'You've sung your damned *Internationale* for the last time.' Whereupon he began to sing the *Internationale*. 'We'll soon make you hold your tongue!' They threw me on the bed and called mockingly to him: 'How about a little musical accompaniment for this?' He sang the *Internationale* while they raped me. Nothing could stop him. They brought in our two children and threatened to shoot them. First they shot the little girl, she was three; then they aimed their rifles at the boy; his name was Mischa, he was five. My husband stopped singing. They shouted in glee, then shot my little boy, and afterwards my husband. That was in the Ukraine in 1918."

This brief life story sent shudders down our spine. The woman was right, when she said she had lived through more than we could ever have imagined.

That bit of stark life is taken from the German of Egon Erwin Kisch, 'the famous Czechoslovakian journalist who wrote *Secret China* and jumped off the boat when the Australian Government tried to prevent him landing to attend an anti-war congress'. There is no reason to believe that Herr Kisch was trying to be funny, nor need we assume that the incident never happened: it very probably *did* happen, and just as it has been described. And is not this perhaps the very reason that the anecdote strikes so false a note? The author has given us the facts; but the facts are undigested, unintegrated facts. As a result, horror becomes superlatively ludicrous. 'It's probably never jolly to be raped; but to be raped to the tune of the *Internationale*—!' For that delicious 'Nothing could stop him' one suddenly wants to read 'What a man!' And surely the crushing anticlimax of the last sentence removes the last trace of conviction from the unhappy tale.

According to its manifesto, *New Writing* is independent of political party (although its independence is rather curiously qualified by the statement that it does not intend to open its pages to 'writers of reactionary or Fascist sentiments'. But since the manifesto also declares that *New Writing* is 'first and foremost interested in literature', would it be impertinent to ask if it is Mr. Lehman's opinion that 'writers of reactionary or Fascist sentiments' are incapable of literature?); nevertheless, the bias of most of the work

is proletarian, 'anti-Fascist, anti-militarist'. My complaint is not against the dreadful tedium of its operation. More than any other group, our Leftist writers affect a scorn of literary craftsmanship and rely upon the facts, of social injustices or what-not, to speak for themselves. The facts can't do it.

The fundamental mistake seems to me to lie in the assumption that because a thing is true it will put itself across. *Magna est veritas & praevalebit* maybe; but the fact that Herr Kisch and many of his confrères have set down 'just what happened' does not mean that they have communicated what they wanted to communicate. To have described the circumstances of the oppressed in the very terms of their oppression is no guarantee that the description will be any more moving than so many pages of the telephone directory. Here is a new set of romantic clichés, true enough; but a cliché is a cliché, after all, and a dead account of something that happened to a Buchmanite parson, say, or a Stork Club gigolo. 'But the worker, or the Proletarian Group, is necessarily better material.' Not necessarily. Or, granted that your worker is a more significant and valuable member of society than your Buchmanite parson or your gigolo, he is still no better *material*, so far as literature is concerned, if the writer is unable to make his writing do something more than mirror actuality. It is clearly wrong to assume that the social value of one's subject-matter will make the bones of one's dead prose live. Conviction is not in facts, but in the manipulation and arrangement of facts: that is to say, in style. It is not enough for the literary apologist to feel deeply and to set down simply what happened. He must also be a literary craftsman. Because he so often is not, we have these grim little stories in *New Writing* and the equally grim long stories in *The Caravan*: stories of how something almost happened—something is almost on the point of happening, and often there's a great deal of noise and heavy breathing (of the Kisch shocker); but nothing seems to come of it all. Indeed, a suitable epigraph for this kind of almost-story seems to me to be that plaintive phrase in *The Hamlet* of A. MacLeish:

*There was  
No one always underneath the bed.*



With a few exceptions, then, the prose of *New Writing* is correct and flat. *The New Caravan* is different: much of the prose is no longer correct, but the tedium is by no means so hard to bear. Partly this is due to the fact that the contributions are more varied; but this is not enough to account for the *Caravan's* atmosphere of vitality. For one thing, the Americans are willing to take chances that the Europeans will not take. I suppose there is more downright bad writing in the *Caravan* than there is in *New Writing*, and certainly there is nothing here so good as Chamson's 'My Enemy'; but if I had to take one of them with me to a desert island (which God forbid!), I'd chose the *Caravan*.

Freshness, humour, imagination. True, the Lugubrious Record is here too: witness a little gem by Paul Corey entitled "Bushel of Wheat; Bushel of Barley"—the perfect type of no-one-always-underneath-the-bed; but this is offset by the intense and beautifully handled "Far from Cibola" by Paul Horgan, which is better than anything but the best in *New Writing*. Here again comparison may be useful. Both stories deal with a gesture of revolt on the part of workers against an understandable and avoidable economic injustice, and both stories end in frustration; but their implications are not those of frustration: one is to understand that the failure of the tiny strike in the one, and of the abortive bread-riot in the other, is actually, in a deeper sense, a social victory. The two stories intend substantially the same thing, yet one fails as signally as the other succeeds. It is not at all a question of 'sincerity'; both stories are passionately felt; the difference is, that Mr. Horgan knows what he feels and knows how to transmit it, while the clichés and the awkwardnesses of "Bushel of Wheat" suggest a fundamental insecurity of attitude towards his subject on the part of Mr. Corey. The characters in "Far from Cibola" are alive, and the dialogue is immediate and full and strong; but the people so greyly move through "Bushel of Wheat" are unrealized little-revolutionary-mag. types—the vague and gutless workers, the (rather surprisingly) sympathetic foreman, the dastardly bosses—, and any latent force is paralysed by such high-school parodies of realism as this:

From the Clausen farmyard, hidden in a grove of soft maples, came the sound of a girl calling chickens. Charley

cocked his head. "Cathie's callin' me, Pop."—The grim lines on Claussen's brown face jerked as he laughed. "She's callin' chickens, you young fart. Once you're married to her you won't make that mistake for long."—Charley pulled his belted dungarees away from his middle and fanned himself with his shirt-tail.

And so on and so on. I'm sorry. I prefer even Herr Kisch. . .

There is little non-fiction in *New Writing*, and what there is, from Spender's four poems, is of slight merit. Three of these poems are, as I have said, translations from Hölderlin. I know nothing of Hölderlin; but if these are adequate translations, he must have written very much like Spender: a slight, fluid, deceptively lucid technic, the value of which seems chiefly decorative. Once upon a time there was a Spender who caught the imagination with simplicities of passion that promised at last, after so much tentative writing, the complete working expression of the new revolutionary poetry: there were memorable passages in *Vienna*, for instance, and such pieces as his fine poem beginning

I think continually of those who were truly great.

But there is little trace of that promise here:

Alas for the sad standards  
In the eyes of the freshly dead young  
Sprawled in the mud of battle.  
Stare back, stare back, with dust over glazed  
Eyes, their gaze at partridges,  
Their dreams of girls, and their collected  
Faith in home, wound up like a little watch.

This strophe, from the only non-Hölderlin poem in the group, is really more than sleight-of-hand. It is immediately but superficially moving, partly because of the masterly cadence, and partly because of the sure-fire appeal of the images; but the images are confused, and the emotion seems to me to depend ultimately upon such movie clichés as 'Their dreams of girls', and 'Faith in home'. 'Wound up like a little watch' sounds better; but is it really, I'm afraid it's only less lazy. At any rate, the passage is instinct with a *flebile nescio-quid*—only, when you've blown your nose and wiped your eyes and discarded the recruiting-office connotations of Faith, Dream, Home, Girl, it suddenly seems as though the *nescio-quid* were triumphing over the *flebile*; and from what I

have seen of Spender's recent work, I should say that that is precisely the direction in which he is moving.

In *The New Caravan* there is a lot of verse, and here and there an undeniable poem. Of the poems, I suppose the most competent is Wallace Stevens' 'Mr. Burnshaw and the Statue'; but when I have admired the impeccable technic, I find that I can say or feel no more about it: my association with the erudite and frequently readable theologians of *Hound & Horn* was cut short before I was educated up to

Come, all celestial paramours,  
Whether in-dwelling haughty clouds, frigid  
And crisply musical,

and so most melodiously, forth. I am more excited by what is probably an 'easier rhetoric'—Conrad Aiken's, say, in his poem called 'Separation'; E. E. Cummings'; Phelps Putnam's, in a curious version of Psalm CXXXVIII; Muriel Rukeyser's. But even if I had never pondered (*hic labor, hoc opus!*) the dicta of Profs Tate and Winters, I should still dead-pan the rhetoric of a sonnet (it happens to be by Raymond Holden) whose octave begins:

'Good-bye, my love, and not good-bye, and hail!

and whose sestet:

Good-bye and hail! Hail to that lovely you  
That, in some lesser cause, may find its full.

And again I am sorry; but as long as I live, I shall never never believe that there is anything but a narcotic force in songs of or about the American Indian:

'Hé-ya, hé-ya, hé-ya,  
Hé-ya, hé-ya, hé-ya,  
The ghosts of buffaloes,  
A lone eagle feather,  
An untamed Navajo,  
Hé-ya, hé-ya, hé-ya,  
Hé-ya, hé-ya, hé-ya.'

*That* is by Mr. Jean Toomer (Hé-ya, Mr. Toomer!), and there's no use looking underneath the bed this time, because somebody came and took the bed away.

One turns from *The New Caravan* a little pensively. It is obviously more fun than *New Writing*; but one wishes that some-

how its verve might have been subjected to a stronger technical discipline. Like *transition*, the five *Caravans* have been tremendously valuable as a testing-ground for work that the general run of publishers could not or would not touch; but it is a question whether or not a testing-ground has any validity beyond itself. Moreover, one had expected an increasing authority; but I do not find the latest *Caravan* any more expert, any more significant, than the first. As one plods through the formidable mass of material presented here, one is troubled by that school-literary-magazine doubt: this is an admirable and generous venture, certainly, and it is an excellent thing that elsewhere unpublishable writing should be encouraged; nevertheless, would it not have been better to have discarded many pieces that are facile enough, pleasant enough, but of no outstanding merit,—would it not have been fairer, really, to the writers who have a great deal to say and the technic with which to say it, to have cut this boon down by half? *Praecipitandus est liber spiritus*, I know; but Petronius did not mean the kind of breathless, sloppy composition that vitiates so many of these poems and stories. The value of *The New Caravan* is to be found in the work of Paul Horgan, Dr. Williams, Meridel Le Sueur, Wallace Stevens, and a handful of others; the rest is agreeable but negligible. Of course, between the correct tedium of *New Writing* and the slapdash of much of this book there is only one choice; but it is not a choice that can be made without reservations.

Nor, certainly can one accept *New Directions* without equally poignant reservations. Much in Mr. Laughlin's preface seems to me more hopeful than sound: I find it hard to follow him, for instance, in his theory that his experimental contributors are even unconsciously propagandists of social reform. Moreover, it must be admitted that *New Directions* is a misnomer: *Nostalgia*, or *Back to the Trolley Line* would have done better. For twenty years at least the various dissociative literary technics represented here—Steinism, Surrealism, Paramyth, Vertigral,—have been State Highways, no new paths. But I can not feel that these are particularly important objections. For one thing, no matter how long the attack upon jargon-bound barnacle-encrusted reflex-action language has been going on, the faults of *New Writing* and



*The New Caravan* suggest that there's a lot left to do. Granted that 'language controls thought': any method of making men language-conscious—conscious of words, of the texture and weight and δὴναμις of words as individual word—is a valid method, I do not mean, of course, that 'dream-writing' is the only method, although dream-writing does serve the purpose of concentrating all the attention upon the word-as-such (as well as the less high-minded purpose of infuriating the reader who must always have a Meaning in what he reads); there are many others, and most of them are illustrated in this collection. And if the objection is raised that *New Directions* is even more of a testing-ground than *The New Caravan*, and hence even more open to the school-literary-magazine doubt, Mr. Laughlin might very well answer that, unlike the *Caravan*, it was not intended to be anything more than a testing-ground, or a laboratory, if you will, for specialized experiments in how words work. Whether or not he would agree to this limitation of his purpose I do not know; probably not; but it is the laboratory quality that interests me most in his publication. And the fact that there is little that is 'New' in most of the experiments does not lessen the importance of the fact that here there is a minimum of shoddy writing and automatic thinking.

Uncle Roderick will separate the contributions into two groups: (a) things that make sense, and (b) damned drivel, sir. Column (b) will certainly be longer than column (a). And Uncle Roderick will be supported, although on different grounds, by X, most subtle and most pontifical of critics, who used to write for *transition* himself, ah yes, but who has now put those toys behind him and reverted to the heroic couplet and the classical reference. X's column (a) will be shorter than Uncle Roderick's, but 'damned drivel' will be translated 'derivative logopoeia, technopaegnia failing to disguise essential sterility'. And in spite of Mr. Laughlin's remarks about social reform, I hate to think what the socially-minded critic will say. But it seems to me that all three of these gentlemen will be making the fundamental mistake of condemning a thing for not doing what it was never intended to do. If preoccupation with the machinery is humbler than other literary preoccupations, it still has a right to be considered on its own ground.



But there is more here than preoccupation with the machinery. The most impressive contribution to *New Directions* is Cocteau's superb essay on Chirico, 'Le mystère laïc', in the Olga Rudge translation which was published a few years ago in *Pagany*. The translation itself is a miracle of ease and fidelity, even more of a triumph than Rodker's version of 'My Enemy' because of the greater elusiveness of the original. And here again the striking thing is the tactile quality of the prose:

Picasso sucked daggers. It leaves a bitter taste in his mouth. Miro sucks sticks of barley sugar, sucks them to a point. The point gets sharper and sharper, but barley sugar gets 'shorter.'

'Le mystère laïc' has never got the attention it deserves; it is a *locus classicus* in modern criticism, and Mr. Laughlin is to be congratulated upon having decided to salvage it from the oblivion of *Pagany's* dead files.

Next in effectiveness are John Wheelwright's fine *Elegies*, with the fierce concentration of emotion at the close:

As over water when a mill-sluice shuts  
film ice, twitches between inverted  
tendril and frond, frond and tendril:  
your rushing brain lay still.  
Our blood-voluted immorality, fallen  
is only rock  
—though proud in ruin, piteous in pride—  
Ned. Ned.  
Snow on a dome, blown by night wind.

There is no such writing as this in *New Writing*, and *The New Caravan*. There is too little of such writing anywhere in our day. It is the very antithesis of the Spender fragment that I have quoted above, where the image is evocative merely, or though definite enough, vague in reference. Here is no decoration of any kind. We may say that the cadence, the diction, the imagery of the Spender poem are suited to its subject-matter, its emotional impulse; here they *are* the very matter, the very impulse. For me there is more intensity in the last five lines of this passage, with its tortured rhythms and its hammering silences, than there is in the whole of the other poem with all its facile mannerisms. And it illustrates as well as anything in the book what Mr. Laughlin means by 'a housecleaning of language, a hacking-away of dead

wood': it is a rhetoric, it is a preoccupation with the machinery, and its success lies precisely here.

It is interesting to observe the same quality of verbal awareness in the work of two of the youngest contributors: Miss Barbara Deming and Mr. Laughlin himself. Miss Deming's poem is brief enough to be quoted in its entirety:

Listen  
 cats love eyes  
 they move tinily on leaning paws  
 stride slanting up the whole body  
 as movement tightened along a whip snapped  
 hence my preoccupation  
  
 this man's gesture  
 completing immediate object  
 culminates  
 stride at the hip  
 movement of arm for lifting  
 stiffening off at shoulder  
 to stop there  
  
 i am seeking a lover who can move like a cat  
 with taut stretchiness  
 swift almost unmotion  
 animal move

The peremptory 'listen', and Cummings' characteristic compound ('unmotion') and lower-case 'i', are blemishes; otherwise the technique is sure, subtle, admirably disciplined, and, as in the case of *Elegies*, proceeding *ab intra*. The third and fourth lines, for example, and the second line of the third strophe, are exactly what they say. There is a complete fusion of rhythm, word, emotion. It is a much younger poem than Mr. Wheelwright's, and it is built upon a conceit rather than upon a pervasive symbol; but within its compass it is as much of a success. The Laughlin poems are equally fine in a different way. Here, it seems to me, is something really 'new' in *New Directions*: a new versification (Mr. Laughlin considers his metric 'tentative', according to a remark in the preface). The method is quite unlike Mr. Wheelwright's austere concentration and Miss Deming's economy; these tercets and quatrains are loosely built; but the looseness is deceptive; actually the constantly varied repetitions, the shifting rimes, the curious way in which the stanzas seem to turn in upon themselves, are as consciously calculated as, say, the rhythm of Mr. Wheelwright's

'Snow on a dome, blown by night wind',

and the subjection of vigorous diction to this arbitrary form effects a not dissimilar result. The poems are too long to quote here, and mutilation would destroy them; but I would refer anyone interested in the subtleties of versification to 'The Cat and Dog at Love's Door' and 'The Glacier and Love's Ignorant Tongue'.

There are also four poems by Wallace Stevens, a story by Miss Stein (which contains, by the way, a conceit which is at once delightful and instructive: 'She played the piano and at the same time put cement between the keys so that they would not sound'), a story and a poem by Dr. Williams (as well as an essay on 'How to Write', which is, however, so badly written that its educational value is dubious), and a second-string poem by Marianne Moore. Mr. Pound contributes a Canto, and Gorham Munson contributes a flock of thoughts on the New Economics, *e. g.*:

Up with the New Economics of Social Credit! Through consumption to prosperity—through mutual welfare to creation—through creation to the new social order. The Revolution Absolute!

(No, I've no objections; but I can't bring myself to like the manner.) There is a poem by Mr. Louis Zukofsky accompanied by a poetical 'Interpretation' in the course of which Mr. Zukofsky uses a great many Italian phrases and very kindly provides us with a translation in the next line, thus:

Consider:  
 "(thoughts' torsion)"  
 la battaglia delli diversi pensiera. . .  
 the battle of diverse thoughts—

And as for the rest of *New Directions*, particularly the non-communicative (by which I mean non-paraphrasable, I suppose) pieces, I see nothing to be gained by plunging into a discussion which could never satisfy the usual question 'What does it mean and what's the good of it?', since the question itself is irrelevant. A great deal of it bores me almost as much as do the most lugubrious moments in *New Writing*; some of it diverts me tremendously—Montagu O'Reilly, for instance, and Lorine Niedecker,—and maybe that is the wrong reaction. It is pleasant to have Mr. Jolas on the job again in a new shop; and I agree in advance with every-

thing that Uncle Roderick and Prof. X have to say about 'What the Sea Fowl Yelped as she Sat on the Shore' and its companion frivolities. But whatever the worth of the individual contributions, *New Directions*, even at its most perversely adolescent, is awake, active, disciplined, and, thank God, neither too correct nor too careless to attack the System with laughter.

. . . . and this time, I think, we have found lots of people underneath the bed: playing Sardines . . . .

*by Joseph Jay Rubin*

### YOUNG MAN OF LETTERS

THE SEVEN WHO FLED. By Frederic Prokosch. New York; Harper & Brothers. 1937. \$2.50.

About poetic-prose, enough has been written; not enough poetic-prose has been written. If tin-foil glitter, surface lushness may blight early such hybrid; the many strengths inherent may make for survival. The novels of Frederick Prokosch contain those strengths. First in *The Asiatics* (1935), now in *The Seven Who Fled*, he exhibits the result of grafting cleanly to prose statement; the discipline of rhythm; high choice of words; resurrective imagery; full response to sensation.

Complete acceptance of *The Seven Who Fled* depends upon the acceptance and triumph of a stylistic premise: That poetic-prose as used by Prokosch is not mere decoration but valid sensory translation; that each such translation is of equal and cumulative moment. Then the seven who fled not because of "evil or fear, exhaustion, languor, adventurousness"; endure meaningfully the frank Asiatic accompaniment to seasonal shift, great heat and

great cold; reminiscence and decay; death-making and love-making. Each word record of the flight becomes an environmental brief, witness and aid. Then the novel is one of chiaroscuric conflict, not a formless and static and decadent waiting-to-death.

Rejection stamps as unnecessary the reoccurrent reference to living in huts warmed by burning yak dung; the undertakerless plague cities; unhandkerchiefed millions; other publicizing of filth, vultures, spiders, and scorpions. Then the work has the flavor of *The Duchess of Malfi*, staged in *The Waste Land* and with properties by Hans Zinsser. Rejection leads to a greater consideration than taste and incidental choice:

In *The Asiatics*, the first wander tale, there was equal poetic concern. There were the towns and tribes; italicized word-borrowings; beautiful Ursule (anyone's beautiful Ursule), the much redder than the rose Krusnayaskov, the crazy Prince, the satyr Samazeuilh; the episodes, the dark terror of the Turkish prison, the escape into Russia and the escape out of Russia, the lovely love story and others lusty. And so much more. All written precisely and strongly as, in the second tale, the muddy wooing of Olivia and Setafimov's flesh chase, and the lightning illumined murder of Goupillière. (Excerpted, as several have been, his episodes make strong short stories.)

This *The Asiatics* had, that *The Seven Who Fled* has not. Prokosch first-personed the former. The nameless "I" in his naïf passage never lost himself nor the story. His perception was the dominant one. His route, though more devious than that of the seven, was the more direct. Technically, then, the author reached a kind of picaresque continuity.

In *The Seven Who Fled*, that continuity is broken more than the titular times. Each fugitive has various encounters; and each at one moment, indulges in reminiscence. That flash-back reveals the prior life. Each leaves Asia for Cambridge or Dolya or Andalusia or Marseilles, to re-encounter the people, the landscapes, the torments that image-loaded the past. Europe and Europeans intermingle with Asia and Asiatics; cultures, evils, emptinesses, causes and exponents. When the past indulges in like-human habit of reminiscence, the indulgence becomes one luxurious for narrative. Seven becomes more than a charm digit; it is cubed by intricate



alliance. In attempt to solve this intricacy, Prokosch adds the Shanghai epilogue. One wonders whether Olivia survived the recent bombing.

American by birth, European in hesitage, Medieval in sympathy (Ph.D., Yale, *Chaucerian Apocrypha*), Frederick Prokosch at twenty-eight has been extravagantly blurbed and praised and twice prized (Guggenheim and Harpers'). He is possessor of a skill and a training and an ambition. These he has twice spent upon Asia. There is America, Mr. Prokosch.

*by Lascelles Abercrombie*

#### WIDSITH AS ART

WIDSITH, Edited by Kemp Malone. Methuen's Old English Library; pp. xiv, 202. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 10/6.

The most important thing about a poem is that it is poetry—or at least intends to be. The poem *Widsith* has long been a magnet of immensely attractive power to every sort of criticism except literary criticism. History, geography, archeology, philology—and what else?—have been drawn so voluminously into its discussion that it might easily seem no room was left for aesthetic appreciation. And this is not surprising. When almost every line is a puzzle for the learned, literary criticism might well be daunted; and in any case, it might be asked, what could it make of a composition that appears to consist mainly of a perfunctory cataloguing of obscure proper names? But if *Widsith* does seem to be that, or anything like that, surely it must be because literary criticism has not done its duty by it. It is a fair assumption, that the man who composed the poem, meant to create a work of art. If so, should not all criticism, literary or not, start from that intention, and come back to it? But, though it would certainly be untrue to say that the art of the author has been ignored (how could Chambers, of all men, possibly have done that?), yet it is true, on the whole, that literary criticism of the poem has tended to be

merely incidental to its scientific criticism. In its discussion, the poem has seldom been *seen* as a poem, until it has been considered as a collection of scientific problems; and when these problems have been answered, to the satisfaction of this critic or that, the poem, instead of a work of art, had become a concourse—aesthetically speaking, a fortuitous concourse—of pieces of information, extremely varied in their provenance; and its author a disembodied spectre, flitting from one age to another.

It is the grand merit of Professor Kemp Malone's edition of *Widsith* that it avoids this serious methodological mistake. The result is not only singularly beneficial to literary criticism, which now, almost for the first time, finds the artistic purpose of this most remarkable composition credibly elucidated; it is perhaps equally beneficial to the scientific interpretation of its many fascinating but troublesome problems. In a sense, Mr. Malone is the most objective of the poem's editors. Instead of allowing scientific argument and speculation to form the condition under which he sees the poem, he begins by looking at the poem as a work of art; and it is his fine and just perception of the nature and structure of the poem as such that governs his discussion of the problems it involves.

What Dr. Malone's aesthetic analysis of the poem brings out is not, of course, absolutely new. It has often been noticed—it is, indeed, unmistakable—that the poem has some sort of strophic structures; and again that the quality of its substance varies somewhat sharply from "personal" to "impersonal". Working out these two lines of suggestion, with the most scrupulous nicety, and combining them together, Dr. Malone shows the poem to be, first, an elaborately complex and cunningly balanced piece of poetic architecture. This, at any rate, is, to me, completely convincing. Such beautiful and masterly craftsmanship does not happen by chance: we are in the presence of a great artist, thoroughly conscious of his art and using it with supreme assurance. There is nothing "primitive" or "native" here. But further this poet is using, for his own purposes, considerable masses of poetic material which have descended to him from a much earlier age, combining this with lyrical *intermezzi* (the feeling of which colours the whole), and setting boundaries to the consistent shape of it all by means of Prologue and Epilogue. The poem is an imagi-

native reconstruction of the great English heroic tradition, and at the same time (as the focus of this) an imaginative re-creation of the profession and ideals of the scop, in whose personality the author's purpose is dramatized. The kind of interest in heroic legend which the poem implies is not that of the heroic age itself, but of what we may conveniently call "culture". "The author of *Widsith* was a cleric at home in vernacular poetry, sacred and profane."

This is a bold, even a startling, pronouncement. Dr. Malone then takes the side of those (hitherto largely discredited) critics, who have declined to regard *Widsith* as an authentic survival from Anglo-Saxon heathendom. But his late attribution is wholly unlike the sort of thing which Chambers condemned—an expedient to discredit inconvenient evidence. Indeed, Dr. Malone has it both ways; for, though the poem itself, and its purpose, belong to an age of learning and literature, it is in part constructed out of pieces of ancient heroic song. And these Dr. Malone seems to regard as historically reliable—at any rate, to the poet, who, unless he had thought them so, would not have used them. "His interest in the Germanic heroic age was that of an antiquary and a historian . . . He thought highly of the scop's calling because he looked upon poetry as the vehicle of history." Nevertheless, *Widsith*'s figure and utterance are an artistic creation, and must be finally so judged; the long splendor of the heroic age is collected into a single panorama, unified by the scop's ideal personality; and this removes, or at least disarms, the chronological difficulties in the poet's matter.

How this ingenious and most illuminating view of the poem will stand the criticism it is sure to provoke, time will show. It is in any case the result of a rare alliance of scholarship and aesthetic understanding. The rigor and fullness of Dr. Malone's scholarship need no comment of mine. As to his aesthetic understanding of the poem, it has at least given literary criticism something substantial to stand on. It becomes an intelligible question, to ask how much of the poetic art of *Widsith* survives for our aesthetic enjoyment, and how much we can perceive we have lost. There is first the form of the poem; its stately and subtle design certainly remains for our appreciation, as a most admirable achievement in itself. Moreover, this is not an affair of merely external tech-

nique; this is form which is intellectual as well as instrumental. As for the texture of the poem, Dr. Malone has several excellent things to say in critical appreciation of it; though to enjoy it as he can must be the reward of scholarship of an order resembling his. Yet there are lines the poetry of which must strike anyone:

Ful oft of pam<sup>1</sup> heape      hwinende fleag  
giellende gar      on grome peode.

But for us, a chief part of the poetry which must have delighted the author's contemporaries has gone for ever. We can never recapture their *poetic* response to the roll of proper names in the three "thulas", which make the bulk of the poem's substance, and are the very life of the poet's artistic purpose. But we can see, in some sort, the kind of art he used. It was nothing "primitive"; in its concision and symmetry it might almost be called sophisticated. It required of its audience an instantaneously vivid and imaginative response to close-packed learned allusion, which may very well remind us of what Mr. T. S. Eliot has sometimes required of his readers—say, in *The Waste Land*. Or we might compare Milton's great catalogues of proper names. Something like Milton's superb management of their syllables may doubtless be claimed for *Widsith*. But both poets count on much more than mere phonetic sensibility. Some geographical or historical shadow of the poetic significance Milton intended in his proper names remains for most of us. But the significance the poet of *Widsith* intended in his can only be, for us, a matter for scientific inquiry—much of it with no certainty of result.

It is just where we are aware of our inevitable failure in poetic response that scholarship finds its main problems. Dr. Malone's discussion of them is presented as a corpus of immense but compact learning in his Glossary of Proper Names. I am not competent to dilate on it. Some of it is as revolutionary as his view of the art of the poem. Gone are the Whales; gone too are the Medes and Persians—not by excision, but by interpretation. In a poem of this kind, successful interpretation may be measured by the amount of "interpolation" it assumes: the two stand to each other in inverse proportion. It is to be noted that Dr. Malone's interpretation assumes what must be almost the minimum of interpola-

<sup>1</sup>The "p" in "pam" and "peode" is the nearest our Press can get to the Anglo-Saxon thorn and should be so read in the quotation.—Editor's apology.



tion: a total of eight lines, as compared with "the 46 lines of 'possible later interpolations' set aside by Chambers." Obviously, Dr. Malone's edition, as he himself proclaims, is deeply indebted to Chambers' great work; and to Chambers it is dedicated. No doubt his Glossary of Proper Names will keep his critics busy. Remarkable for its contribution to pure scholarship as the book is, to me its most important aspect is the view it expounds of the poem as a work of art; for this is not the view merely of an aesthetic impressionist—it is tested at every point, and in the result supported, by exact and acute scholarship. It pervades the whole book, as is right. Thus the Hebrews are no longer to be rejected because a heathen could not have heard of them; their condemnation now is simply that they are absurdly discordant with the poem's artistic purpose—at least, they are if the "cleric" had *our* historic sense. But can we be sure he had? The lines (82, 83) that bring in, along with Hebrews, Israelites, Assyrians, Indians and Egyptians, are among the few Dr. Malone decisively rejects; and they certainly look like interpolation. We should all be happier without them. Yet why are they here? Presumably because some scribe took (as modern criticism did till this edition) line 84 to refer to Medes and Persians. Yet why *should* that have set him off composing on his own? If the "cleric" himself brought in these orientals to enlarge his imaginative panorama, doubtless he made a grave artistic mistake; but poets do sometimes make grave artistic mistakes. It is no guarantee that these so questionable lines occur (grotesquely enough) in midst of a thula; we do not know how far the poet regarded the thulas as sacred from *his own* interpolation. And besides, can we be sure that the thulas really are, not merely ancient heroic material, but ancient heroic poetry? Can we be sure they are not the work of the "cleric" composing *in the style* of the ancients?

It is not for me to discuss the text, which is based on Dr. Malone's own transcript from the Exeter Book. Other critics will have considered aspects of the edition which I have neglected. I have confined myself to that aspect of it which, as I see it, marks an epoch in the study of the poem. For it has restored to us as full a power of understanding and appreciating the art of the poem as we are likely to recover. In so doing, it is a notable contribution to literary history; it is a striking enrichment of our sense of the culture of Anglo-Saxon Christianity.



**S**O, too, in youth, the real plastic energy is not in tutors, or in lectures, or in books 'got up', but . . . in the books all read because all like; in what all talk of because all are interested; in the argumentative walk or disputatious lounge; in the impact of young thought upon young thought, of hot thought on hot thought; in mirth and refutation, in ridicule and laughter; for these are the free play of the natural mind and these cannot be got without a college.

—WALTER BAGEHOT

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